

Old Testament Theology



Study Guide

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A. Introduction to Old Testament Theology

1. Defining Theology and Old Testament Theology

Anselm of Canterbury famously coined a meaning of theology in his motto “faith seeking understanding.” (*fides quaerens intellectum*) which “means something like an active love of God seeking a deeper knowledge of God.”¹ For those who love the Lord, this indeed is our goal in theology, and in studying the Bible as God’s Word.

- What is Theology? (This first page is a slightly modified review taken from Anders Gerdmar’s New Testament Theology Study Guide, Fall 2014)²
 - Theology means ‘knowledge about God’, *theos, logos*
 - For a secular academic, theology is the systematic study of the thought of e.g., in the Old Testament or a certain text
 - For us, theology *is* the knowledge about God
 - theology is not only knowing what someone else said about God—even if that is interesting,
 - it is 1) knowing *about* God and 2) knowing *God*
- However, we believe that we get to know God basically through the Bible—and never against the Bible
 - God has given us a Biblical framework for our relationship with him, to 1) know *about* Him and 2) to know *Him* (cf. the Hebrew work *yada*, used for both ‘knowledge’ and e.g., the intimate relationship between husband and wife, Gen 4:1; Matt 1:25)
 - In scholarly exegetical work, we study what the Bible says about him.
 - Thus, theology is also a human intellectual work:
 - we formulate questions (What is the Old Testament theology of atonement? Of covenant? etc);
 - we make exegetical investigations (e.g., word study, analyses of the overarching ideas, historical background study) to answer those questions
 - we systematise, and even if we want to let the Old Testament govern the way we do it, our brains and traditions affect the systems we develop.
 - “Work with the Word of the Lord” (Acts 6:3) has happened from the first day of the Church, and you who are called to the ministry has to become a work (wo)man of the Word (2Tim 2:15)
 - Paul sets for us an example of a worker in ‘Old Testament Theology’: Paul studied hard. The ‘scrolls’ and text Paul had to study from was the Jewish Bible, our Old Testament. (2 Tim 3:16: Acts 26:24). He had a lifestyle of study (2Tim 4:13), at the same time as he nurtured a close relationship with God.
 - That is, there is a dialectic between study of the Bible and life in the Spirit

¹“Saint Anselm,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, revised Sept 25, 2007. Accessed Feb 2, 2015.

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/anselm/#FaiSeeUndChaPurAnsThePro>

² Except review from Anders Gerdmar, “Study Guide for NT Theology,” Brno, Fall 2014.

- N.B. There is no opposition between solid exegesis of the texts and your knowing God intimately by the Spirit.
- ***What is Biblical Theology, Old Testament Theology, New Testament Theology, and Jewish Biblical Theology?***
 - Although we as Christians divide the Bible into New Testament theology and Old Testament theology, we must remember the Bible is one complete, unified book.
 - *Biblical* theology, deals with the whole Bible as one document through which God has revealed himself to us.
 - What is the difference between Biblical theology, New Testament theology and Old Testament theology?
 - Biblical theology, basically, systematises the entire Biblical material into one system
 - New Testament theology systematises the theologies of New Testament authors individually and together. New Testament theology tries to see what's 'new' in the revelation about God, that was often a mystery or a shadow in the Old Testament (Eph 3:8-11; Heb 8:4), written for our instruction and hope (Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:6-11).
 - New does not mean that it never was there, only that it has been revealed (*apo-kaluptô*)
 - Old Testament theology systematises the Old Testament themes and ideas in the different books of the OT separately, and together part of the whole canon of Scripture.
 - What is the difference between Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology
 - Johan Gabler initiated a separation between “biblical and dogmatic theology” in 1787. He also began the division between historical/human concerns and divine/universal concerns.
 - ✚ For Gabler, doctrines of God, sin, and salvation were divine/universal concerns, which should be separated from issues of historical concern or their relationship to modern events. This essentially segregated the Academy from the Church. (We will not be separating these in our study of Theology!)
 - ✚ This also created a divide between the Old Testament and the New Testament, often segregating the OT to historical studies and the NT to divine concerns. This divide was deepened by this historical oriented source-critical research, especially identified with Julius Wellhausen toward the end of the 1800's that continued through the last century and on into today.
 - ✚ This system also robbed parts of the Bible of their authoritative status: if some of Scripture was viewed as “only” historical and less important, less authoritative and more questionable than other parts, than the canon of Scripture itself was divided and the divine nature of the Word of God weakened.
 - ✚ Systematic theology ideally gathers information from Biblical studies, history of church and dogma, but also includes the horizon

out of which we do theology. A key goal is to identify major tenets of the faith. Dogmatics, ethics, and the philosophy of religion are considered subdisciplines of systematic theology.

- ✚ Biblical theology is focused on detailed exegesis of passages that contributes to the overall interpretation of the books and authors of the biblical text of the canon, and unveiling revelation of God. A key goal is to identify the major themes and key ideas in the story of God.
- ✚ Systematic theology is more dogmatic-prescriptive categorization and itemized list. Biblical Testament theology is more historical-descriptive big picture.
- What is the difference between Old Testament Theology and Jewish Theology (Theology of the Tanakh)?
 - Much of Christian Theology has held the New Testament as more important than the Old Testament for various reasons, or has treated the Old Testament as unnecessary for reading or interpreting the NT, sometimes producing anti-Jewish readings of both the OT and NT.
 - Marvin Sweeney states, “Fundamentally, Judaism is committed to a relationship with G-d as defined through divine Torah whereas Christianity is committed to the notion that its relationship with G-d is defined through Jesus Christ.”³
 - Some of the differences are demonstrated in the order of the canon. Although they are the same books, the order of books in the two canon shapes the reading by the Jewish and the Christian communities.
 - ✚ Jewish canon reflects the Jewish commitment to the Torah as the foundation of divine relationship with God. The Former Prophets (Historical Books) disrupts the ideal of this divine relationship, for which the Latter Prophets lament, rebuke, call for return, and foresee the ideal. The Writings attempt to restore the ideal embodied in the Torah, begin with the Psalms which is structured into 5 Books that recall the Torah, and end with Chronicles and a return to the Land of Promise, “let them go up!” to the Land.
 - ✚ The Christian canon reflects the Christian commitment to the coming and second coming of Jesus Christ, ending with the Minor Prophets who, while warning, look to “that day” and end with Malachi “the sun of righteousness will arise with healing in his wings ...”
 - ✚ The structure of the Tanakh points to the cyclical patterns of the ideal life, disruption of life, and restoration of the ideal.
 - ✚ The structure of the Old Testament points historically and prophetically to the revelation of Jesus Christ as the culmination of human history. Sweeney observes:
- Pentateuch recounts the early history of the world from creation through the patriarchs

³ Marvin A. Sweeney, *Tanakh: A Theological and Critical Introduction to the Jewish Bible*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2012.

- The goal is to seek and describe the theology, beliefs, and practices of the people “back then,” within their time, language, and culture. A canonical approach is not part of this method, nor a literary approach which considers the Bible as a whole, unified text. The Old Testament and New Testament are not considered in light of each other.
- This type of theology can only be done within the academy, drawing from historical, archaeological, and material culture and studies as an exegetical task rooted in the biblical language.
- Its positive elements include:
 - ✚ James Barr, John Barton and many others consider this to be the first step, not the only step, in the theological process: we have to know what the text *meant* before we can rightly know what it *means*.
 - ✚ Krister Stendahl sees the preacher’s task as being able to translate first the socio-historical language of the ancient text (the work done by the academics) into the modern social location (the work done by the church, with the preacher representing the church).
- Problems with this approach
 - ✚ Can be presumptuous: we can be overly confident in our ability to analyze the thoughts, intents, and worldview of ancient cultures
 - ✚ Can neglect the larger corpus of the canon, either Jewish or Christian
 - ✚ Can read too much into other ANE literature, or give too much weight to non-biblical sources in making interpretations, or reading back into the biblical text.
 - ✚ Stendahl criticizes scholars who emphasize this Historical descriptive approach as being subjectively convinced that they are capable of being objective scholars who only see the facts.
- Type 2: Biblical Theology as the History of Redemption (Redemptive-Historical)⁷
 - This approach looks to history as it unfolds through Scripture to reveal the purposes of God in a progressive process of revelation through time.
 - Primary interest is the overall theological message of the Bible for the church. Requires sensitivity to literary reading. Christocentric focus. Requires view of the Bible as a unified narrative whole.
 - Although this type is strongly historical, it is rooted in the concept of redemptive history of the entire biblical canon. This approach follows the linear, or chronological, development of the history of the story of redemption book by book through the Bible.
 - The major themes often followed in this approach may include creation, sin, covenant, land, kingdom, redemption, and restoration, traced through the biblical text.

⁷ In the textbook by Klink and Lockett, this approach is descriptive of D. A. Carson, similar to Geerhardus Vos, and Rosner.

- This is also a scholarly, exegetical task, like Type 1, but has a focus also upon application for the church. The key themes are seen to all progress of God’s self-revelation leading towards the story of redemption.
- Dependent upon inductive, exegetical analysis of passages, building towards greater synthesis, ending ultimately in a systematic theology.
- There are at least three different “schools” within this one type.
- Type 3: Biblical Theology as Worldview Story⁸
 - This middle category is literary and philosophical, looking for grand story in the narrative text for the theological themes that bridge and connect the two testaments.
 - A major goal in this method is looking for the unity in the shape and plot of the Bible. Analysis draws from both the historical and the theological elements of the narrative to develop the overarching biblical worldview. This approach appeals both to the academy and to the church in its meta-narrative approach.
 - Rather than reading the Bible as one grand progressive unfolding narrative (as the Historical-Redemptive above), this approach looks for the overarching connections between Old and New Testaments.
 - Sets the passages of the NT within the context of the worldview-stories of the early Christians and Second Temple Judaism.
 - Some focus on the *literary* coherence of the biblical narrative, while others focus on reconstructing the *historical* world of the Bible.
 - Encourages readers “*to understand the individual episodes or passages of Scripture in light of its overarching story line. Instead of progressing from the smallest bits and pieces of the narrative to the larger whole, (BT3, this approach) starts with the larger narrative portions of the text through which individual units are read.*”⁹
- Type 4: Biblical Theology as Canonical Approach¹⁰
 - Seeks to unite historical and theological approach. Rather than looking at the canon of Scripture as a progressive revelation because of its sequence, it views canon in light of being Christian Scripture.
 - Although the term “canon” is often used interchangeably with “Scripture,” these are used differently by some.
 - This approach is not a literary reading in terms of the plot structure of the whole Bible, but it is a theological reading of the whole Bible in light of the Christian faith.

⁸ In the textbook by Klink and Lockett, this first methodology is descriptive of N. T. Wright, and some of its proponents include Michael W. Goheen and Christopher J.H Wright.

⁹ Klink and Lockett, chapter 5, “Biblical Theology as Worldview-Story,” (location 1693 of 3853), italics original.

¹⁰ In the textbook by Klink and Lockett, this first methodology is descriptive of Brevard Childs. Childs uses the term “canonical approach.” James Sanders coined the term “canonical criticism.” Others suggest a “canonical consciousness” in their theological approach, with focus on inner-biblical exegesis.

- Can be considerable overlap between Type 3 and 4, since this approach also considers both the historical and the theological elements of the narrative. The emphasis here, however, is to join the historical significance of the text with contemporary application for the church.
- Blends academic rigor of what the text meant “back then” along with a modern contextualization. This approach produces more of a cross-canonical blending towards the identification and development a theological theme or motif.
- Important to this methodology is recognition of the shaping of the canon into its final form. The canon itself becomes the overarching frame for the historical and theological interpretations of the Bible. Both academy and church are necessary in this process of establishing biblical theology.
- This approach is both academic, but also focused upon application by the confessing community, the church. It is therefore both descriptive (historical) and prescriptive (theological), which is supposed to be lived, not just studied.
- Type 5: Biblical Theology as Theological Construction¹¹
 - This is a prescriptive approach that fits postmodern concerns.
 - There is no interest or concern for the biblical passage’s ancient location or circumstance.
 - The predominant focus of this methodology is application by the church for the confessing community, outside of the academy.
 - Three basic approaches: the “revelational” approach, in which the text is read for eternal truths regardless of the original context; the “textual” approach looks for the symbolic world of the Bible as a framework for understanding the contemporary world; and the “functional” approach places the interpretation of the text into the hands of the contemporary believing community – reader-response methodology – to give the text significance.
 - Problems with this approach is subjectivity, and opening the door to individual interpretations that may be far removed from the intent of the author or contextual purpose of the text.

3. Material for Doing Theology

▪ Authority of Scripture

- The biblical text itself, both Old and New Testaments, as well as ancient sources and traditions attest to the authority of Scripture, and continual regard for The Book as a unified piece of divine inspiration, set apart from all other literature.¹²
- Recognition of the unity of the biblical text, and its source of divine inspiration is required in order to form a truly Christian biblical theology.
- The many methodologies that are used leads to a diversity of emphases. Nevertheless, as long as the foundation of approaching the Bible as divinely

¹¹ In the textbook by Klink and Lockett, this methodology is descriptive Francis Watson.

¹² See R. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984).

inspired unified text is present, the diversity of methodologies will form a mosaic to appreciate the application of the biblical text to our personal lives and mission.

▪ ***Problems with historical criticism and reasons to incorporate literary reading.***

Is the Bible a whole book or a “rag-bag” collection?¹³

- The historical-critical method created a “hermeneutic of suspicion” toward the Bible.
 - Scholarship claimed that the Bible, especially the Old Testament, was simply a cut-and-paste collection of multiple sources, compiled by Jewish people with ideological motives for their own political or religious agendas.
 - People became highly skeptical or cynical about the Bible as the authoritative Word of God.
 - This has led many to wrongfully believe that the Old Testament is full of errors, and was corrupted along the centuries of rewriting so that we cannot trust what is written.
 - Furthermore, for many decades, the idea of the Bible as a unified work was lost, and people in both the academy and in the church succumbed to reading the text of Scripture as isolated sound bites, a collection of disjointed writings and recorded sayings that contradicted each other, forming into a confusing, nearly unreadable or indiscernible mess, lacking a coherent message.
- In the last decades, parts of scholarship turned to looking at the individual books of the Bible as a whole through the literary approach, and also to looking at the Bible as a whole through the canonical approach.
 - These methods have proven the unity of the books of the Bible, and their inter-relationships to one another, while pointing out some of the errors in the historical critical approach.
 - This brought a corrective to the historical critical method.

▪ ***Literary Approach to Biblical Theology***

- Better able to grasp the big picture, the *Drama of Scripture*.
- By analyzing plot and theme we can more clearly see the grand theological narrative, retold and re-envisioned through the span of theological texts.
- Literary studies in more recent decades have demonstrated through multiple methodologies that while recognizing that sources were used in writing and compiling the Old Testament, that there is a clear unity, a cohesive story, and a consistent messages. The grand narrative, and major themes artfully weave through the various books of the Bible.
- Related patterns of creation-uncreation-recreation, of rebellion-exile-return, and of sin-repentance-redemption recur throughout Scripture. The interweaving of biblical texts, and the interplay of imagery and story, create a grand narrative of the mission of God from opening chapter to close: the drama of redemption.

¹³ Dempster, “Chapter 1,” *Dominion and Dynasty*.

▪ The Canon

- We will be using the Jewish organizational structure of the Hebrew Bible, as used in *Dominion and Dynasty*. As Rendtorff notes, Christians rarely read the Old Testament in its final Jewish order, even though this was likely the one that Jesus and the early church read.¹⁴
- Brevard Childs notes that “the ‘story of faith’ was largely preserved in historical sequence (Genesis through Ezra) along with a variety of ‘commentary’ (Psalms, Prophets, Wisdom).”¹⁵
- The Christian arrangement emphasizes eschatology, The Jewish arrangement emphasizes ethics and return to the Land (the restored Jewish community).
- The sequence from the Former Prophets (Historical Books) followed by the Latter Prophets (Major and Minor Prophets), builds a perspective of a historical events being “the outworking of the divine word within history.”¹⁶

4. Perspective for Doing Old Testament Theology

▪ Old Testament Law and the Christian

- The meaning of “Law”
 - The Hebrew word, *torah* (תורה) most likely comes from the root *yarah* (יריה) “in the sense of stretching out the finger, or the hand, to point the way, to point out a route” (*HALOT*); instruction.
 - The Greek word *nomos*, used for the Hebrew word *torah* and translated “law” according to a leading Greek Lexicon (BDAG) “The primary meaning relates to that which is conceived as standard or generally recognized rules of civilized conduct esp. as sanctioned by tradition . . . a system of conduct. . . .”
 - Western culture has read “judicial, codified statutes” into the word “law”
 - There is a range of uses in both OT and NT as: the whole OT canon, the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy, the Decalogue, legal genre. (See, for example, Gen 26:5; Exo 12:49; Prov 1:8; Matt 7:12; John 8:5)
- Uses of the Law Historically in Protestantism
 - According to Luther, there were TWO USES OF THE LAW (i.e. 10 commandments – he did not want to import the Law into the Christian life. He was suspicious of “merit theology.”
 - ✚ First Use of the Law – Moral - Convicts sinners or Condemns unbelievers
 - ✚ Second Use of the Law - Civil Purpose – restrains wicked men

¹⁴ Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 38

¹⁵ B. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992, 97), as quoted in Dempster, 39.

¹⁶ Dempster, 42.

- Calvin disagreed with Luther – believed there were THREE USES OF THE LAW –
 - ✚ Third use of the Law – Moral -- the Law is a Guide for Godly Living – we need Law, esp. the 10 Commandments to provide guidance for us as to how we are to live.
- Luther thought the OT Law was no longer binding for the Christian
 - ✚ In Lutheran catechism, the 10 commandments come under the first part – of convicting of sin.
 - ✚ In the Reform Catechism (Heidelberg) it comes under rules for godly living
- Both saw the ritual, or ceremonial, laws as essentially not applicable to the Christian
- Stereotypes & Danger in the extremes – Luther v. the Reform tradition, there is a reason for slightly different means of practical living evident between the two traditions. There are dangers with any extremes:
 - Danger in Reform tradition tends to lean toward legalism
 - Danger in Lutheran tradition is to lean toward anti-nomianism (freedom from ethics)
- LEGALISM <-----> Antinomianism
(I can do whatever I want)
- “The problem with the traditional approaches, which see significant discontinuity between law and grace, and between works and faith, is the difficulty of answering why God gave the law to the Jews in the first place ...”¹⁷
 - “... there is no place in the OT or in the NT where such a distinction is made in this way and with such implications... *in essence, we need to shift our thinking about this subject away from the “limit” or “extent” of application of the law to the “level” or “kind” of application. The issue is not how much of the law applies, but how it applies.*¹⁸
- Relationship between Old Testament and the Christian: Three Main Points:
 - The covenant provides the context for the law, not vice versa. The overall relational commitment of the covenant is the context for the obligations of the relationship. Therefore, application of the OT law outside of a redemptive covenantal context does not work biblically.
 - The OT law was never intended to function outside of a redemptive relationship with the God of the covenant within which it is embedded.
 - ✚ The Covenant through Moses is a natural extension of the Abrahamic Covenant and carries the promises and obligations of the Abrahamic Covenant forward into the future of Israel as a nation. *As children of*

¹⁷ A. Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Test: A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching*, Chicago: Moody, 2013, 155.

¹⁸ Richard E. Averbeck, “The Whole Law as Ethical: The Unity of the Law and Its Ethical Significance in the New Testament, in the Church, and in Society,” presented at ETS, in the Biblical Law Group, Nov 14, 2001, 20-21.

Abraham by faith in Christ who fulfilled the Law perfectly, we fulfill the law in the same sense and in the same way Abraham did – by faith. But this too carries promises and obligations for us as Christ followers.

- ✚ Accordingly, absolutely no part of the OT Law has "passed away" even today. "Not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law " (v. 18b)
- Two greatest commandments that embody the whole Law: Mat 22:36-39; Mk 12:28-34; Lk 10:25-28; Because - Love is the fulfilling of the Law (Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14; Jam 2:8)
- *Three legitimate USES* of the law according to NT scripture (The Law is good if you use it lawfully):
 - The 1st use of the law -- to regulate the nation of Israel (Jews) Acts 15 : the law was an essential part of God's original intention in regulating his relationship with Israel as a nation. It is *not* transferable to the church in this way -- it is not to be used to regulate the church as it had been used to regulate the Jewish nation. See Acts 15:5 (note what is meant by this according to 21:20-21, 23-24) in contrast with 15:19-21 (cf. 21:25).
 - The 2nd use of the law -- 1 Tim 1:9 – law made for lawbreakers & rebels (not to convict believers): the law was effective at showing people they were sinners. This is a good thing, not a bad thing! This is one of the ways the law is still "good" (see, e.g., Rom 3:19-20; 7:7, etc.) -- it leads to repentance.
 - The 3rd use of the OT law -- the law is still useful as a guide for the Christian life (1 Tim 1:5) – the positive point in I Tim (Lutherans do not believe in the 3rd use of the Law.)
- Ultimately, according to Paul, the purpose for teaching the Word of God, including the OT law "is *love*, which comes from a *pure heart* and a *good conscience* and a *sincere faith*" (1 Tim 1:5) -- cf. Jesus' two great commandments (Matt 22:34-40) as well as Paul in Rom 13:8-10, Gal 5:13-14, 22-23 (see esp. v. 23b; cf. also James 2:8). This is the *positive point* in 1 Tim. 1:3-11!
 - The OT law was then and still *presently* today is "good" (Rom 7:12-14, "So then, the law *is* holy, and the commandment *is* holy, righteous and good. . . . We know that the law *is* spiritual . . .") -- -we must *never* compromise on this principle!
 - In fact, it is not only "good," but it is also *useful* for the Christian: ". . . from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are *able to make you wise for salvation* through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is *useful for* teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be *thoroughly equipped for every good work.*" (2 Tim 3:15-17).

- It applies directly to the life of the Christian today in a New Covenant "written on the heart" sense so that we live it from a *transformed "heart"* (or "spirit") and, therefore, manifest it in the way we live (Jer 31:31-34, Rom 8:4, 6, 2 Cor 3:3, 6-8).
- God sent His own son to eliminate sin as a problem (Rom 8:1 and 3b) "in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the *Spirit*" (Rom 8:4).
- Reading the Prophetic Message
 - Always contains a warning:
 - “Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying , Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statues, in accordance with all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.” (2 kings 17:13)^{i 1}
 - Followed by Judgment and/or Promise
 - Goal is always personal and/ corporate salvation or deliverance
 - Key Literary Features
 - Content of Prophetic Genre:
 - ✚ Foretell (what will happen if)
 - ✚ Forthtell (declare the current situation and God’s assessment of it)
 - ✚ Visionary
 - ✚ Call to Repentance
 - ✚ Prophet’s life part of their message– Intercession between God and humanity
 - Common Structure:
 - Specified event, time, place and/or people
 - ✚ “The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, concerning Judah and Jerusalem, which he saw during ” (1:1)
 - Introductory phrase or prophetic call introducing the unit, i.e. “hear now” “thus says the Lord” “then the word of the Lord came to me ...”
 - ✚ “Listen O heavens, and hear, O earth, For the LORD speaks” (Isa 1:2).
 - Argument
 - ✚ "An ox knows its owner, And a donkey its master's manger, *But* Israel does not know, My people do not understand” (Isa 1:3-4).
 - Call
 - ✚ “Bring your worthless offerings no longer ... Wash yourselves ... Learn to do good ... Come now, let us reason together ... (Isa 1:13-17)
 - Conclusion – resulting threat or promise, “therefore” “thus”

✚ “But if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword ...” (Isa 1:20)

- Episode marker: next introductory phrase or change in event, time, place and/or people.

Group Discussions:* How does the Old Testament apply to the Christian life?
Presentation of summary from discussion groups

5. Overview of the Old Testament: Plot and Major Themes

▪ Plan, purpose, and plot

- The storyline contains facts about: people, places, dates, and events
- Real key is an understanding of God and his plan, the “plot” (or “plotline”) of the Bible
 - Plot “ a meaningful or purposeful arrangement of incidents or events in the text from beginning to end.”¹⁹
- The Old Testament lays the foundation for the NT. Every page of the NT contains a reference to the Old.
- Our main purpose, our ultimate goal, for studying the OT is to know God better, not just facts about God, but to know Him in a personal, meaningful, relationship. The result of knowing God better, should impact who we are – as a person made in His image; how we think and act – like God’s own children and representatives; and how we treat others – as people of dignity and worth; and how we care for God’s creation
 - The OT contains God's story, in which God reveals himself to humanity.
 - The story of God begins with creation
 - But quickly turns to history:
 - From the beginning, God’s plan is reveal Himself to us.

▪ Introduction to Major Themes

- Creation is the first important theme God uses to teach about Himself and us.
- The role of humanity is the next important theme, introduced in the creation narrative.
- However, man's **sin** disrupted the relationship, and man was driven away from God's presence. The rest of the Bible records God's initiative to restore the broken relationship.
- The theme of **exodus and exile** quickly become important themes in God’s story of redemption. Over and over again, the relationship between God and Israel is disrupted by the people's sin in turning to other gods to worship, and to deliver them from their troubles.
- God’s **presence** is another important theme in the history of redemption. God has been present in the earth from creation, in the Garden, and He has never left.

¹⁹ Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 45.

- The Scripture foretells a time when relationship and presence will be established at a yet-deeper level in the new creation, when Christ returns.
- Another important theme in relationship to God and the story of redemption is **Covenant**
 - The word Testament (Latin) = Covenant (from Hebrew word, *brit*)
 - Through covenant God reveals himself and commits himself to a plan that involves humanity
 - *Hesed* = Covenant love
 - In the history of God's relationship with humanity, God made several covenants:
 - ✚ Covenant with Noah and creation
 - ✚ Covenant with Abraham and his offspring
 - ✚ Covenant with Moses – people and promised land
 - ✚ Covenant with David for kingship – that kings would come from him, and eventually a king who would have an everlasting kingdom
 - ✚ Covenant through Jesus Christ – a new covenant in His blood,
 - In order to experience God's presence and His covenant, we need to accept the authority of his word, as revealed foremost in the Bible.
- How to Read and Study the Old Testament
 - Because the OT contains God's self-revelation, we must approach the text seeking to determine God's intended message. Above all, we must be careful not to manipulate the text for our own purpose or subordinate the intent of the Bible to what we think as readers. To interpret the text properly, we must investigate the genre of the text, establish the intended audience, and their historical situation, and determine the intention of the author/editor.
 - First, Prayerfully – as the Word of God
 - Set aside own presuppositions
 - Let the Bible speak for itself – listen for what the author intends to communicate: what's the message
 - Recognize presuppositions you may have or have heard and be willing to set them aside as you “hear” the text
 - Evaluate validity of presuppositions
 - Subordinate presuppositions to Scripture
 - Interpretation of specific text being read
 - Determine genre (narrative, song, poetry, legal, lament, etc)
 - Discover information about intended audience and circumstances of writing
 - Identify authors purpose
 - Application of the Old Testament
 - Avoid “proof texts,” role model, typology, and “word for the day”

- Keep in mind how the interpretation ties in with the rest of the Bible (“canonical approach”)
- Application is tied to interpretation
- “What questions do I have?”
- “What can I learn from what from what the text is teaching?”
 - ✚ About God
 - ✚ About myself
 - ✚ About others and the world

B. Thematic Approach: Major Theological Themes of the Old Testament

A theme is “an idea which is part of the value-system of the narrative.”²⁰

6. God

Apostles’ Creed (ca. AD 140), the oldest creed of the church that preserved the ‘rule of faith’ transmitted from the first apostles. “I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth ... (and affirms the Trinity).

Nicene Creed (AD 325) begins, I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen ... (and affirms the Trinity)

- Creator, Monotheism
 - Judaism was the first known faith to believe that there is only one God. The *shema* of Deut 6:4 states that the LORD our God, is a unique God. There is no power, no source, no idol, none to match, and nothing like the LORD God.
 - Other gods are described as worthless (Jer 2:5, 11; 10:8, 14:22), they are not gods (Jer 2:11), and are only made by humans (Isa 40:18-20; 44:9-20; Jer 2:26-28)
 - God is creator; Lord of history as told and fulfilled through prophecy:
 - ✚ “I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come.” (Isa 46:9-10)
 - Bible begins with God, Elohim, in the beginning.
 - Concept of God v. gods as creator in comparing biblical view of Creation with other cultures of their time (Isa 40:12-26)
 - ✚ Egypt
 - ✚ Mesopotamia
 - ✚ Genesis creation account is unique compared with all other creation accounts:
 - God both speaks into the prevailing cultures, and against them
 - Unlike the cultures around Israel, the God of creation could not be

²⁰ Robert Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 95.

manipulated by magic or rites

- He makes order, not chaos
- No other powers to rival God
- Everything He does is good

○ Some names of God in the Old Testament

- Elohim (Gen 1)
- El Shaddai (God Almighty; Gen 35:11; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; Exod 6:3)
- El Elyon (God Most High; Gen 14:18-19)
- Yahweh Elohim Emet (LORD God of Truth; Jeremiah 10:10)
- El Gibor (The Mighty God; Isa 9:6)
- El ‘Olam (The Everlasting God; Gen 21:33; Isa 40:28)
- El Qannah (The Jealous/Zealous God; Deut 6:15 – will not tolerate us serving any god but Him)
- Father (Isa 9:6 – Everlasting Father; Psalm 68:5)
- Adonai (Lord, Master; Psalm 8:1)
- Melek, Melek Olam (1 Sam 8:7 – Israel rejected God as being king over them; King of the Universe; Jer 10:10)
- Yahweh Elohim (LORD God; Genesis 2:4; Deut 6:4-9)
- Yahweh (LORD, Covenant God; Exodus 3:11-15)
 - ✚ -Nissi (The LORD my Banner; Exod 17:15)
 - ✚ -Roi (- Who Sees /provides; Gen 22:14; earlier Hagar in the wilderness identified El Roi in Gen 16:13, the God Who sees me)
 - ✚ -Ro‘iy (- my Shepherd; Psalm 23:1)
 - ✚ -Tzidkenu (-our Righteousness; Jeremiah 23:6)
 - ✚ -Meqoddishchem (-Who Sanctifies you: Exod 31:13; Leviticus 20:8)
 - ✚ -Yireh (-Who Sees, or Who will Provide; Gen 22:14)
 - ✚ -Tsebaoth (-of Hosts/Armies/Heavenly hosts: Isa 22:14; Zechariah 1:3; Haggai 2:9)

○ Character of God:

- Holiness: idea of separation, “otherness” (Exod 15:11; Lev 10:3; 1 Sam 2:2; Isa 6:3; 8:13)
- Righteousness: right behavior, especially in terms of a relationship; associated with justice
- Jealous: since God is God, He expects the sole loyalty and allegiance of His people

▪ God-Spirit-Word

- Preliminary understanding of the Trinity begins in Gen 1:1-3.

- Word, also begins in Gen 1:1-3. John picks up this understanding in the opening of his gospel record (John 1:1-14)
 - Talk about the Messiah and bridge to New Testament on Friday
- Spirit: *ruah* means spirit, Spirit, breath, and wind.
 - First reference to the *ruah elohim* is Genesis 1:2. The activity of the Spirit is the activity of God. God's presence is associated with His Spirit (Pss 51:11; 143:10; Hag 2:4-5; Zech 4:6; Eze 37).
 - God's Spirit gives divine life. (Gen 2:7)
 - God alone is "the God of the spirits of all flesh" Num 16:22
 - ✚ Connection and contrast between breath and dust, spirit and flesh: Humans are filled with the divine breath. Gen 6:3 in the Flood narrative may provide indication that humans are "kept alive by the spirit of God within." In the Flood narrative we see themes from the Garden of Eden. There the breath of God breathed into Adam is in contrast to the dust of which Adam was made: giving spiritual life and divine connect to the dust. It is the very combination of these two that makes us uniquely human, in contrast to all other creatures.
 - In the OT, the Spirit "is 'put upon' people (Num 11:29), 'comes upon' them (e.g., Num 24:2; Judg 3:10; 1 Sam 10:6; 16:13), 'clothes' them (Judg 6:34), 'rests upon' them (Isa 11:2), and is 'put within' them (1 Kgs 19:7).
 - Also the Spirit comes to "fill/filled/fulfilled"—with a sense of completion, fullness, and fulfillment. It does not refer to an initial endowment or one time event. Rather, to a state of wholeness, fullness, fulfillment, fruition or completion
 - Working of the Spirit within people: The Spirit is given for a purpose
 - ✚ Interpret dreams: Joseph was "one in whom is (the) spirit of God" according to Pharaoh (Gen 41:38).
 - ✚ Enable with special wisdom and skills: Bezalel is "filled with (the) spirit of God" (Exod 31:3) -- skill in constructing the tabernacle; Exodus 28:1-3 – language of being filled with the spirit – translated "skilled workers"... "who have ability ..." they are "filled with a spirit of wisdom" ... (52-53)
 - ✚ Empower for leadership with courage: Joshua is "one in whom was (the) spirit" (Num 27:18) and "full of (the) spirit of wisdom" (Deut 34:9); later Saul, and David.
 - ✚ Prophecy: Ezekiel prophecies to the dry bones in the valley in Eze 37:4-6, "I will cause *spirit* to enter you, and *you shall live*... and put *spirit* in you, and *you shall live*"
 - ✚ Power: Micah - "I am filled with power, with (the) spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might (Mic 3:8) -- to prophecy, filled with Spirit and power
 - ✚ Multiple gifts: Daniel had the spirit in him (Dan 4:8, 9, 18 [MT 5, 6, 15]; 5:11, 12, 14; 6:3) Daniel for knowledge, wisdom, dreams and interpretation

- The distinction is made between Micah and Samson: there are those in whom the quality and character of God has been inscribed into the character of their lives who are filled with the spirit of God, yet, there are those who merely give way to temporary spurts of spirit empowered activity to accomplish God's justice in spite of the narrowness of the person's character. (45)

- Presence: Garden, Theophanies, Tabernacle, Temple, Immanuel

7. Creation

- Creation by God's Word and Wisdom (also Pss 33:6, 9; 148:5-6; Isa 55:11; Proverbs 8:22-31)
- Creation as God's Sanctuary (Psalm 104)
 - Genesis 1 as the account of the earth as God's cosmic temple, or sanctuary, prepared as a physical place for His presence.²¹ Correspondence between Gen 1 and the construction of the Tabernacle in Exod 35-40.²²
 - Garden as the Holy of Holies, with humanity as God's royal priests: Aside from Gen 2:15 "the use of *ʿbd* and *šmr* to describe Adam's work in the garden of Eden suggests that he functioned not only as an administrator of the kingdom but also, on some level, as a royal priest of Yahweh's 'sanctuary' in Eden."²³
 - Tabernacle and Temple filled with creation imagery
 - Trees carved into the walls and woven into the design
 - Menorah (lamp stand) in the shape of a tree with 7 branches and blossoms
 - Angels embroidered into the curtain separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies.
 - Gold in the Garden in Havilah, which is good, and precious stones, and use of gold in the Holy of Holies and precious stones on the high priest's breastplate
 - Angels hovering over the Mercy Seat.
 - Symbolizes that God is with us; sacred space²⁴ (Exod. 29:42-45)
- Creation as humanity's nest (Gen 1:2 and Gen 2)
- Creation linked with redemption in Isa 40-55 – God as creator points to his power to fulfill His covenant promise to redeem his people

²¹ Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 86, "the sanctuary as a world, that is, an ordered, supportive, and obedient environment, and the depiction of the world as a sanctuary, that is a place in which the reign of God is visible and unchallenged, and his holiness palpable, unthreatened, and pervasive"; likewise, Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "Cosmos, Temple, House: Building and Wisdom in Ancient Mesopotamia and Israel" in *From the Foundations to the Crenellations: Essays on Temple Building in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible* (ed. Mark J. Boda and Jamie Novotny; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2010), 399-421.

²² Mark J. Boda and Jamie Novotny, eds., *From the Foundations to the Crenellations: Essays on Temple Building in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible* (Alten Orient und Altes Testament: Veröffentlichungen zur Kultur und Geschichte des Alten Orients und des Alten Testaments 366; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2010).

²³Ibid.

²⁴ Waltke, OTT, 458, 7.

8. Humanity

- Image of God (Genesis 1 and 2, Psalm 8)
 - What does it mean to be created in the *image and likeness* of God?
 - Biblical View: Royal Representative, Child of God, and Priest
 - Gen 1:26-28, and 2:7-24 -- When God formed the adam, placed the adam in the Garden (Gen 2:7), and gave purpose (Gen 2:15)
 - God gave clear instructions regarding the scope and the limitations of the authority and responsibility given to his appointed representative.
- **Three major points** of Gen 1:26-28 are: (1) our identity, (2) our purpose before God, and (3) our responsibility before God and to the world.²⁵
 - **The first point which speaks to our identity is the image and likeness terminology itself:** According to v. 26, God began the creation of human beings by proclaiming, “Let us make humankind in our *image* (Hb. *tselem*) as our *likeness* (Hb. *d^emut*), . . .” (v. 26a).
 - The term “likeness” appears 21 times in the Old Testament in addition to the three times it refers to our “likeness” to God (Gen 1:26; 5:1, 3).
 - From Egypt through Mesopotamia, statues of kings and governors have been found at the entrance of their cities or lands. Where ever the statue was, that represented the rule, the land, the laws, and the authority of the ruler.
 - Similarly, where ever we are, as God’s living statues, we are to be representing His rule, establishing His land, laws, and upholding the authority of God’s kingdom.
 - The statue itself functioned to represent the king before his god in the place where the statue was set up.
 - We have been set up in the midst of God’s creation to represent him and his interests. It is not that we look like God physically, but that we are physical beings who stand within the physical creation as God’s stewards. We stand before God to serve as his authoritative representatives on this earth “in his image as his likeness.” We have been put in charge and made responsible for how things go here.”
 - **The second major point speaks to our purpose before God.** It is related to the first, and arises from the grammar of the second clause in v. 26: “Let us make humankind in our image as our likeness, *so that they may rule* over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the (wild animals of the) earth, and all the crawling animals that crawl on the earth.” The second clause gives the purpose for our creation in the image and likeness of God.
 - Our understanding of our image and likeness needs to be seen in direct connection with our purpose, which is to rule over all the earth on God’s behalf (i.e., as God’s “image”) in a way that is somehow similar to the way God rules over all of everything (i.e., as God’s “likeness”).

²⁵ The following on image of God contains excerpts from, Richard E. Averbeck, “Having a Baby the New-Fashioned Way: An Old Testament Perspective,” Deerfield: Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, *draft 4-21-09*.

- ✚ Thus, image (and likeness) goes through two cycles in these verses (i.e., v. 26 and then vv. 27-28). The conspicuous fact is that both cycles end with the mandate for us to “rule” over the other creatures.
 - We are God’s image and likeness – his statue.
 - As the *Imago Dei* we have a particular function. In terms of function, the primary correspondence between us and God is that he is the supreme ruler over all creation, and we are designed to rule on his behalf from within his creation as a supremely important part of it (cf. Psalm 8:6-8).
- **The third major feature speaks to our responsibility before God and in the world:**
 - All humanity created in the image of God
 - ✚ We were created as relational beings by a relational God.
 - ✚ Genesis 9:6 makes this clear when God declares us once again to be those made by him in his own image
 - ✚ To disrespect the image is to disrespect the one whom the image represents.
- **In Summary**, God’s created design for us humans is
 - **Physical:** being created in God’s image as his likeness is primarily a physical matter, not in terms of looking like God in some physical way, but rather that we are physical beings who stand within the physical creation as God’s “statue.”
 - **Actively representational:** as God’s “statues” our purpose is to stand for him, his authority, and his divine purposes amid the whole creation. We are called to “rule” as managers of his creation. We represent him in this world. This is our function. It is our responsibility to do this, and to do it well; that is, according to God’s character and creative design.²⁶
 - **Relational:** God made us to represent him not just individually, but together, as male and female, and in the ways we relate to one another.

The first unit of Genesis (Gen 1:1-2:3) closes then, with God resting, not because he was tired, but because he had completed the “very good” work of creation, unopposed, having appointed his royal regents, male and female, and given them the authority, and presumably the power, to take their position of carrying out God’s plan and purposes in the earth.

- **God holds us accountable to Himself for the way we treat one another.** Our ‘image of God,’ as cited in Gen 1:26-28, was not lost after the ‘Fall.’ The image of God remains, as shown by Gen 5:1-2, and 9:6. To strike another human is to strike at God. On this basis, all wrongs done to others, God takes personally..
- **God knew that we humans would fail.** That we would not represent God well, or use our power rightly. He knew that we would need someone to show us how to do this! Someone to help us carry out God’s plan. God knew that we would make a royal mess of things, a mess so huge, that only God in His own Person

²⁶ Richard E. Averbek, “Having a Baby the New-Fashioned Way: An Old Testament Perspective,” Deerfield: Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, *draft 4-21-2009*, 19.

and Power could solve for us. Even before humanity's first big mess,

- **God knew that His provision for us would be Himself.**
- **Sin, Distorting the image of God** (“brokenness”): Cause and consequences
 - Even after the “Fall,” humanity still bears the image of God.
 - At the end of the Flood, creation continues anew with additional directives given by God concerning food and human relationships. (Gen 9:1-13).
 - Distinction between predominant Jewish and Christian understanding of the origin of evil.
 - ✚ In Christianity, the origin of evil enters the scene in Gen 3 rather than in Gen 6.
 - ✚ In Judaism, there is no *fall* and no *original sin*, but humans have a disposition to both good and evil: sin is our propensity, but also our choice.²⁷
 - However, both Judaism and Christianity look to repentance, forgiveness, redemption, and a new heaven and new earth.

9. Redemption

- Election (Noah, Abraham-Israel, Moses, David, Jesus, Church):
 - Chosen for representation, not for isolation.
 - Blessed to be a blessing
- Covenant and Relationship: the Covenants of God (Noah, Abraham-Israel, Moses, David, Jesus, Church)
 - Definition: A covenant is a means of expressing and/or a method of establishing and defining a relationship.
 - The most common terminology for making a covenant in the Old Testament is "to cut (*karat*) a covenant (*berit*)" (e.g. Gen. 15:18).
 - ✚ = to establish (or determine) the obligations (or stipulations) of a relationship between two persons or groups of persons.
 - ✚ Our focus is on biblical covenants between God and man (vertical). But the same customs and terminology are used in the Bible to establish relational obligations between men (horizontal)
 - Customs associated with making a covenant:
 - ✚ Swearing an oath – focuses on the relational commitment
 - ✚ Eating a meal together -- focuses on relational involvement
 - ✚ All covenants have promises and obligations
 - Major covenants of God
 - Noah: Universal covenant (Gen 9:1-17) includes Noah, his descendants, and all living creatures of every kind (v. 16),

²⁷ Davies, “The Origin of Evil,” 43.

- ✚ Sign for the Noahic Covenant is the rainbow
- ✚ God's promise to not destroy the earth again with a flood.
- ✚ Obligation not to shed human blood.
- Abraham: Personal and Family covenant (Gen 17:1-27; Gen 12:1-3; 15:1-21):
 - ✚ God's promise included land, offspring, and blessing (Gen. 12:3).
 - ✚ Obligations: faithfulness and circumcision
- Moses: National covenant (a holy nation, a kingdom of priests; Exod 19).
 - ✚ Functions "under the umbrella" of the Abrahamic Covenant
 - Many promises – Ex. 19:5b-6, Lev. 26:40-45, Dt. 30:1-10 (cf. Jer. 32:36-44 and Ezek. 37)
 - Many obligations – Ex. 19:5a, 8, 24:3, 7, Lev. 26:46, 27:34, Dt. 28:1 and 15, 29:10ff, 30:15-20, and all the commandments, statutes, and judgments in Ex. 20-23 etc. and esp. Dt. 4-11.
- David: Dynastic covenant, a royal lineage to the Messiah (2 Samuel 7:8-17)
 - ✚ Functions "under the umbrella" of both the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants
 - Promise – 2 Sam. 7:12-16, 1 Chr. 17:11-14 (note the distinction), Psalm 89:3-4, 28-29.
 - Obligation – 1 Kgs. 2:1-4, 9:3-9, Psa. 89:30-37, 132:11-12.
- Jesus: the New Covenant (includes and fulfills all of the covenants)
 - ✚ Predicted in Jer. 31:31-37, 32:36-44 (cf. 33:14-26 in MT [not in LXX] on Davidic and priestly covenants) and Ezek. 11:14-21 (esp. vv. 19-20), 36:22-38 (cf. 34:20-31), etc.
 - ✚ Initiated and ratified in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross (Lk. 22:19-20 and 1 Cor. 11:23-26)
- Sacrifice and Atonement:
 - Always about access to the presence of God by grace through faith
 - Views of Sacrifice:
 - Sacrifice as a Gift: giving thanksgiving as a means of approaching God.
 - Sacrifice as Communion: communion with the Lord and with others through the peace offering.
 - Sacrifice as Consecration: through animal sacrifice, often with laying on of hands upon the offering to identify with the offering.

- Five Major Kinds of Sacrifices

Offerings and Sacrifices in the Old Testament		
<u>Freewill (voluntary) Offerings</u> <i>Act of worship toward God</i>		
<u>Burnt Offering</u> an expression of worship and total commitment to God	<u>Grain Offering</u> often accompanied a burnt offering or fellowship offering	<u>Fellowship (Peace) Offering</u> person making offering shared a meal with God
<u>Required Offerings (after giving of the Law)</u> <i>Atonement for unintentional sins</i>		
<u>Sin Offering</u> made as an atonement of a specific, unintentional sin	<u>Guilt Offering</u> made as atonement of unintentional sin requiring restitution	

- Reconciliation:
 - The purpose of redemption is reconciliation
 - Redemption and reconciliation with God is always supposed to be just the first step.
 - Redemption and reconciliation leads us back to our identity and purpose, to be ambassadors, “ministers of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:16-21):
- New Creation:
 - Definition: Apocalypse comes from the Greek word meaning, “revelation” – the Greek name of the last book of the New Testament. Eschatology comes from the Greek word meaning, “end, last, farthest.”
 - Mostly in Daniel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Joel.
 - Apocalyptic, or end time prophecies provide the following purposes:
 - Exhortation and comfort
 - Resistance against oppression: encourages the challenging powers of wickedness, because God is a warrior who will bring ultimate justice.
 - Perseverance in suffering: encourages the ‘long view’ that this life is but temporary and short in light of an eternity with God.
 - Hope in the future eternity: foresees a time of complete shalom, peace and harmony, a new heavens and a new earth (Isaiah 65)
 - The problem of evil will be solved once and for all: all evil will be conquered for eternity.

Group Discussions:* What is our responsibility as humans created in God's image?
Presentation of summary from discussion groups

C. History of Redemption Approach: The Mission of God through the Old Testament

*"God is acting in history for the salvation of the world."*²⁸

Who am I? Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going?

10. Genesis: Creation through the Patriarchs

- Key Ideas: The biblical story of redemption takes the creation of humanity and our identity as the image and reflection of God through four stages:
 - Our original identity in creation as the image of God (Genesis 1-2)
 - The loss of our divine identity through our identification with the world (Genesis 3)
 - Beginning of God's program of redemption and restoration: covenant relationship
 - Ultimate Goal: redemption and restoration
 - The restoration of our identity in Christ, the perfect image of God
 - The transformation our lives as God's representatives through our new life, and renewing of our minds to this new life in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17-5:21)
- Major theological themes
 - Monotheism
 - One God, no others
 - Goodness of God
 - Creation
 - Heavens and earth
 - Humanity
 - ✚ Wonder and splendor of all creation is eclipsed by the creation of humanity.
 - ✚ Jewish tradition: creation of humanity marks the beginning of time (Rosh HaShanah).
 - Humanity as image of God
 - Rightly represent God in close relationship with Him and with one another
 - Serve and protect God's creation as family, and royal priests
 - Sin
 - Not believing God, doubting His character and word

²⁸ Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 22.

- Not obeying God, autonomy and rebellion
- Covenant and election
 - God’s outstretched hand to humanity (no other Lord)
 - Humanity’s choice of faith or faithlessness (Who will you serve?)
- “Image of God” serves as a Frame for Genesis 1-11, which is picked up in Abraham in the chapter 12
 - Gen 1:26; 5:1-2; 9:5-6 – Gen 1:1-2:4 is therefore the first part of the frame – the image of God is picked up from here.
 - Idea of God as Father is built into the first chapter of the Bible (as Gen 1, 4, 5)
 - Our Identity: Rooted in God’s Perspective and Purpose

Introduction: Have you ever thought about the fact that none of us has ever really seen our own face? The best idea we’ve got of what we look like is a reflection of our face. Of course now we have high magnification mirrors with super bright lights so we can see in great detail every crevice and imperfection, while at the same time magazine and computer images of others are air-brushed to eliminate all flaws. But think of it, throughout thousands of years, the best image one could see of themselves was perhaps reflected in still water, in glass, in a metal plate, or through the eyes and opinions of others. How we look and how we appear to others is part of the way we form our self-identity.

God always intended our purpose and identity to be rooted in who He is, in His image. While our outer identities change through time and circumstances, our core identity can remain solid through life's changes.

- Abraham continues Frame:
 - Fulfilling “image of God,”
 - Promise and covenant:
 - father of a multitude,
 - blessed to be blessing to the nations,
 - and having land – sacred place.

- Land Theology

“The fate of the land is the focal point of biblical historiography.”²⁹

“The prominence of land in biblical theology arises from the deep and moving yearning in the human spirit to have a home, to be in a safe place.”³⁰

“In his grace God gives the earth to humankind but reserves the heavens exclusively for himself (Ps. 115:1-16) and reserves his right to control the earth according to his good pleasure.”³¹

²⁹ Moshe Weinfeld, *Promise of the Land*,

³⁰ Waltke, OTT, 534

³¹ Waltke, OTT, 536

- Threefold meaning of “Land” (*eretz*) in New Testament, comes from Waltke’s commentary on the Old Testament³²
 - 1. Earth – in NT: present world, organized kingdom of Satan; future – delivered and Abraham as heir of entire earth
 - 2. Land as geopolitical territory – literally fulfilled in Messiah’s passion and resurrection; spiritual fulfillment for glory after resurrection (church and consummation)
 - ✚ Galilee as locus of beginning of new age
 - ✚ Jerusalem as locus of end of the old age
 - ✚ “Implicitly, then, Old Testament prophecies about Jerusalem’s future glory must find their fulfillment in ways that conform to the transmutation of the kingdom of God from an earthly kingdom into a spiritual kingdom.”
 - 3. Land as spiritual territory in NT
 - ✚ Land as “Christified” – land of Canaan Christified; Jerusalem temple redefined as living, spiritual stones of the church
 - ✚ Therefore, temple as living stones, and land as rest (
 - ✚ “The promises are fulfilled several times but have never been consummated.” (

11. Exodus-Deuteronomy: Slavery and Exodus through the Wilderness

“Israel is called to mediate between the LORD and all nations ... to be ‘a display-people, a showcase to the world of how being in covenant with Yahweh changes a people’ ... ‘The history of Israel from this point on is in reality merely a commentary upon the degree of fidelity with which Israel adhered to this Sinai-given vocation.’”³³

- Key Ideas:
 - Know the LORD
 - Exodus as a redemptive event
 - Covenant commitment and renewal
 - Holiness of God and implication for His people
 - Wilderness as a testing event, Tabernacle as God’s presence (with pillar of fire and cloud cover), Priesthood and representation
- Major theological themes:
 - Who is the LORD (protector, provider, holy, only God)
 - Presence of God and Human Representation (image and intercessor)
 - Reversal of sin (faith, sacrifice, obedience) and redemption

12. Joshua-Judges: Promised Land through the Judges

- Key Ideas:

³² From Waltke, OTT, 567, 578, 539

³³ Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 66 (Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 80).

- God's faithfulness in fulfilling His covenant promises,
- Conquest of the land, Obedience and Failure,
- God's justice and grace,
- Role of the Spirit of the Lord
- Major theological themes:
 - Covenant and Land,
 - Presence of God (God's involvement in history),
 - Conflict of Good and Evil (Doing evil or right in the eyes of the Lord)

13. Samuel and Kings: Monarchy through the Exile

“OT worship was heavy with its future. The temple made the Hebrew long for the day when at last God's dwelling place would be with men (Rev. 21:3). (Dyrness, 146)

- Key Ideas:
 - Divine kingship,
 - Human kingship (good and evil),
 - Worship of the LORD versus Baal (and other gods),
 - Covenant blessings (through repentance and restoration) and curses (judgment and exile from the Land)
- Major theological themes:
 - Covenant (Ark of the Covenant, and Davidic Covenant),
 - Kingship,
 - Presence of God,
 - Charismatic Leadership,
 - Pre-classical and Classical Prophecy

14. Major and Minor Prophets: History through the Eyes of the Prophets

- Isaiah
 - Key Ideas:
 - LORD alone is God,
 - Trustworthiness of the Lord,
 - Divine sovereignty in judgment and deliverance
 - Major theological themes:
 - Holy One of Israel,
 - Servant of the Lord,
 - Redeemer,
 - Eschatology
- Jeremiah,
 - Key Ideas:

- Law in the heart,
- God as potter,
- Exile
- Major theological themes:
 - God's presence,
 - God's justice and righteousness,
 - New Covenant,
 - False Prophets
- Ezekiel: God's Eye View of History
 - Key Ideas:
 - Lord's sovereignty over the nations,
 - Divine judgment and human responsibility,
 - Exile,
 - Restoration of New Israel under Davidic king
 - Major theological themes:
 - "Son of Man,"
 - Human Responsibility,
 - Apocalypse and Eschatology
- Minor Prophets: Echoes and Visions of That Day
 - Key Ideas:
 - God's faithfulness and justice,
 - Social justice (justice, righteousness, and shalom)
 - Judgment on Israel and all nations (all nations held accountable to God),
 - Remnant will be saved,
 - Restoration of Israel
 - Pouring out of the Spirit,
 - Day of the LORD,
 - Major theological themes:
 - Covenant,
 - Justice, Faith, and Righteousness,
 - Redemption and Restoration

15. Psalms and Wisdom Books: Living and Reflecting on the Faith

- Psalms: David, Torah, Kingdom
 - Key Ideas:
 - Blessing of Torah faithfulness,

- Kingship of God,
- Praise and Worship of God,
- Creation revealing God.
- Major theological themes:
 - Davidic Kingdom,
 - Kingdom of God,
 - Creation,
 - Worship,
 - Ultimate victory of God over evil
- Job
 - Key Ideas:
 - Suffering and Sovereignty,
 - Fear of the Lord and Wisdom
 - Justice and Goodness of God
 - Major theological themes:
 - Creation,
 - Problem of evil
- Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations
 - Key Ideas:
 - Wisdom,
 - Covenant love and Faithfulness,
 - Person of Excellence,
 - Vanity,
 - Practical theology
 - Major theological themes:
 - Fear of the Lord,
 - Trust in the Lord,
 - Love the Lord,
 - All other pursuits other than covenant faithfulness are vain
- Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah: Endings and New Beginnings
 - Key Ideas:
 - God working in history even when seems hidden,
 - Endings and New Beginnings,
 - Leadership in Crisis,
 - Spirit empowerment,

- Practical and spiritual wisdom
- Major theological themes:
 - Exile and Return,
 - Coming Kingdom
- Chronicles: “Let them go up!”
 - Key Ideas:
 - Centrality of Temple worship,
 - Role of Priests and Prophets in the kingdom,
 - Evaluation of kings
 - Major theological themes:
 - Worship,
 - Faithfulness,
 - Exile and Return

D. Worldview Approach: How to live in a fallen world

16. God’s Mission through Humanity: The Plot Conflict of Good and Evil

- Problem of evil is a major theological issue, and extremely personal one
 - Theodicy: philosophical defense for the goodness and omnipotence of God in the face of the existence of evil
 - Main reason given by atheists for not believing in God
 - Problem for many Christians, a cause of confusion, anger, and falling away
- Goal: provide a framework for facing, evaluating, and responding to evil, pain, and suffering
 - Prevent simplistic answers or speaking false theology (e.g. Job’s comforters, etc)
 - Prevent passivity towards evil
 - Affirm the goodness and justice of God
- Biblical theology, beginning in Genesis, offers (at least) four major principles

17. Principle of Action-Consequence

- Biblical imagery: seed
- Principle: actions have consequences, unless there is intervention to alter their outcome
- Part of natural law God built into creation
 - Understood by all people and cultures
 - Embedded into the language of the Bible
 - Correction to “retribution theology”
 - Contributes to understanding of justice and law

- Basis of argument in Job

18. Principle of Authority and Responsibility

- Biblical imagery: the image and likeness of God
- Principle: humanity given key authority and responsibility to uphold God's rule in all realms of life in this universe
- Given by God, betrayed and yielded to Satan, image and choice remain, restored through Christ, available by being transformed into the image of Christ
- Vital key to fighting evil
 - Understood in Jewish theology
 - Lost in much Christian theology
 - Demonstrated by Jesus, early church, and various streams of Christianity
 - Empowering
 - Requires knowing our identity in Christ and the fullness what He accomplished on the cross, in his resurrection, ascension, and seated in heaven

19. Principle of Natural Law and Malevolent Forces

- Biblical imagery: sea monster (Gen 1:21) and serpent (Gen 3:1)
- Principle: some things are part of natural law that are good but can cause harm, others are part of dark spiritual forces with evil intent
 - Natural Law: part of God's good creation, but can cause harm without evil intent, as simply being part of nature.
 - Malevolent Forces: spiritual forces of darkness in rebellion against God hate the image of God more than anything in the physical universe. This is the enemy, the liar who is actively at work to kill and destroy, and the dominions of evil that do Satan's will, often demonic powers working through people or other factors in the natural realm.
- When natural law, natural disasters, "wild" animals, or other environmental factors threaten:
 - Know your authority as a believer (Jesus took authority over fish, wind, waves, natural forces, all health problems, maimed limbs to grow, multiplied food; God commanded plants, big fish, a donkey)
 - Do not over-spiritualize, do not be afraid
- When beyond natural law, recognize the source behind the evil coming through human or spiritual entities
 - Jesus took authority over all forces of darkness, Satan and all demonic manifestations, and gave His disciples and all who believe in His Name to have the same authority (Matt 10:1-8; Mark 16: 15-18; John 17:20-21; Eph 1:15-23)
 - Only two kingdoms – God's kingdom, and anything else
 - How the serpent works (Gen 3:1-6)
 - The process of temptation
 - Twisting God's Word

- How humans respond, rightly and wrongly
 - Adam-Eve: Blame, hiding, fear, shame,
 - Cain: Anger, religious spirit
- Satan in the Hebrew as executioner
- Importance of our response and choice
 - Watch how we hear
 - Guard what we see
 - Stand together in unity
 - Trust God's goodness, believe and obey

20. Principle of Mercy and Grace

- Biblical imagery: a covering (*kutonet*), a covenant, and a sign
- This principle trumps (overrules) the other three: God gives mercy to the repentant, and grace to the faithful
- From Genesis 3 through the rest of Scripture, this principle is foundational to the character and will of God, to bring salvation, redemption, and reconciliation
 - God intervenes and redeems even the most evil intentions
 - God beautifully restores the lives of the faithful, even when marred by pain and evil done against them
 - God works through His human representatives to speak, act, save, and deliver
 - This principle is portrayed again and again through Scripture: in the Joseph narrative, through the Judges, to David, and through the Prophets and Writings, and into the New Testament, where His mercy and grace are extended to us all through Jesus Christ

21. How Then Should We Live: Restoring the Image of God

Group Discussions:* How do you see your mission (and/or the mission of your church) as God's image-bearer. Presentation of summary by group representatives

E. Messianic Approach

22. Bridge to the NT

- The Old Testament is the "Holy Scriptures" in the New Testament
 - 2 Timothy 3:15-17
 - You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

- Romans 1:1
 - Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, ⁴ who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, ⁶ among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ

- Romans 15:1-13
 - Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not *just* please ourselves. ² Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. ³ For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME." ⁴ For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵ Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

 - ⁷ Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. ⁸ For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises *given* to the fathers, ⁹ and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written,
 - “THEREFORE I WILL GIVE PRAISE TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES, AND I WILL SING TO YOUR NAME.”
 - ¹⁰ Again he says,
 - “REJOICE, O GENTILES, WITH HIS PEOPLE.”
 - ¹¹ And again,
 - “PRAISE THE LORD ALL YOU GENTILES, AND LET ALL THE PEOPLES PRAISE HIM.”
 - ¹² Again Isaiah says,
 - “THERE SHALL COME THE ROOT OF JESSE, AND HE WHO ARISES TO RULE OVER THE GENTILES, IN HIM SHALL THE GENTILES HOPE.”
 - ¹³ Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Hebrews 10:1-2 (and Colossian 2:16-17)
 - For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. ² Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? ³ But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year.

23. Jesus: Lord and Messiah³⁴

- Genesis 1-3 and Jesus
 - The Word and Seed of God
 - God sends His Word, Light, Life (John 1:1-5)
 - ✚ Seed of the woman (Gen 3:15)
 - ✚ The Word of God and seed (Mark 4:14 and John 1:14; Isa 55:10-11)
 - ✚ Word becomes Flesh, Tabernacles among us
 - Luke 1:31-38 “be done to me according to your word”
 - John 1:14 (skeno-ow – “tabernacle, to pitch a tent”)
 - ✚ Accomplishing What He Has Sent
 - ✚ Light of the world
 - The Image of God
 - Made manifest in Jesus Christ
 - Seeing the Father
 - The Glory of God
- In Genesis, Foreshadowed by:
 - Noah
 - Abraham
 - Judah
- Predicted by Balaam
- Exodus and Jesus
 - One like Moses
 - Victory over the serpent
 - Power over all (Plagues, Know the LORD)
 - Passover and Atonement
 - Wilderness
 - Promised Land
- Foreshadowed in the Davidic Monarchy
 - Hannah, Eli, and God’s Anointed
 - Nathan and God’s Dynasty
 - David’s Dynasty and the Psalms
 - Psalms 110 and 2
 - Rejection of the Messiah (Psalm 118)

³⁴ see Walter C. Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995).

- Betrayal of the Messiah (Psalms 69 and 109)
- Suffering of the Messiah (Psalm 22)
- Triumph of the Messiah (Psalms 68 and 72)
- Messiah in Ninth and Eighth century prophets
 - Messiah as Teacher (Joel 2:23)
 - Messiah in Davidic Dynasty (Hosea 3:4-5; Amos 9:11-15)
 - Messiah as Coming Ruler (Micah 5:1-4; also Micah 2:12-13))
- Messiah in Isaiah (Eighth century prophet)
 - Messiah as Presence of God
 - Messiah as King
 - Messiah as Servant and Suffering Messiah
 - Messiah as Anointed One and Conqueror
- Messiah in Jeremiah, Ezekiel (seventh century prophets)
 - Messiah as the LORD our Righteousness (Jer 23:5-6)
 - Messiah as Priestly King (Jer 30:9, 21)
 - Messiah as Rightful King (Eze 21:25-27)
 - Messiah as Good Shepherd (Eze 34:23-31)
 - Messiah as Reviver of Israel and Ruler over the Nations (Eze 37:15-28)
- Messiah in Daniel (sixth century prophet)
 - Messiah as the Son of Man (Dan 7:13-14)
 - Messiah as Coming Ruler (Dan 9:24-27)
- Messiah in Zechariah and Malachi
 - Messiah as High Priest (Zech 3:8-10)
 - Messiah as King and Priest (Zech 6:9-15)
 - Messiah as Rejected (Zech 11:4-14)
 - Messiah as Pierced (Zech 12:10-14)
 - Messiah as Returning Ruler of the Nations (Zech 14)
 - Messiah as Messenger of the Covenant (Mal 3:1)
 - Messiah as Sun of Righteousness, Healer (Mal 4:2)

24. New Covenant fulfillment of the Old Covenant

- The **Abrahamic Covenant** is fulfilled in the New Covenant – personal or family level covenant
 - Christ is the ultimate “seed” of Abraham (Gal. 3:16)
 - All who are members of the New Covenant are also necessarily “children of Abraham” (compare John 8:31-59, Rom. 4:9-16, Gal. 3:7, 29, etc.) – they have “Abrahamic faith.”

- The motif of “circumcision” (Gen. 17:9-14) is also used in regard to this current fulfillment, that is, in terms of “circumcision of the heart” (Rom. 2:27-29; cf. Lev. 26:41, Dt. 10:16, 30:6, Jer. 4:3-4, 6:10, 9:25, and Ezek. 44:7). Deut 30:6 – circumcised heart, means humble, loves God. Jer 5:4; 9:22-25 – boast that he understands Me... Jer 31 – Law written on heart
- The **Mosaic Covenant** is fulfilled in the New Covenant – national level covenant, need civil law. Exodus 19 – conditional statement 19:5-6; Lev 26 – curses and blessings (context is Sabbatical year) Says, you’re going to rebel, and you’ll be taken into exile (for rebelling) 26:34; 26:40 – if they confess their iniquity in exile (their chastisement) ... and circumcise their hearts ... I’ll remember My covenant (circumcised heart = humble heart) ... 26:43-44
 - Jesus called for and lived out the fulfillment of the law (Matt. 5:17ff, Rom. 10:4 [telos “end” or “goal”?], etc.). To have the law “written on the heart” (Jer. 31:33) is to “live it from the heart” (Matt. 5-7, 22:34-40, 23:23, Rom. 13:8-10, 2 Cor. 3:1-11, etc.).
 - **NOTE:** this includes all aspects of the law, even the so-called “civil law”(e.g., 1 Cor 9:7-14 the "ox" and the "preacher") and “ceremonial law” (see, e.g., Rom 12:1 our person, 15:16 our service, Heb 13:15-16 our worship and communal fellowship; cf. more on this below in the discussion of the OT law and the Christian life)
 - Through the sacrifice of Himself Jesus fulfilled all the requirements for our atonement and, therefore, our acceptance by grace before God. In fact, much of our understanding of the significance of Jesus' death on the cross is dependent upon how well we understand the Old Testament sacrificial system. The New Testament writers often assumed this as a foundation.
 - Fulfillment of Levitical Laws in the NT: Did Jesus fulfill only the moral law? Civil law? Ceremonial law? Or all three ... How is this applied IN the NT? What’s the purpose of each law within the Law, and what’s the corresponding niche in the NT. We’ll look at categories. See, for example:
 - Christ as our peace offering died as the New Covenant ratification sacrifice – cf. Ex. 24:5 and 11 with Lk. 22:19-20 and 1 Cor. 11:23-25, etc. Jesus is both our Passover and our Peace Offering.
 - Christ as our passover lamb (Ex. 12:1-15) died as the lamb of God (cf. John 1:29 and 36), whose blood was shed (cf. 1 Pet. 1:17-21), to create an unleavened community (cf. **1 Cor. 5:6-8** and Mishnah Pesachim 1-3).
 - Christ as our mercy seat, perhaps sin offering (Lev. 4:1-5:13, esp. 4:27-31 [50 times in Leviticus]; made atonement on our behalf (compare with all the ransom terminology in Rom. 3:25, Matt. 20:17-19, 28, Rom. 3:25, Eph. 1:7, etc.), and brought forgiveness to those who trust in Him (cf. 1 John 1:9, etc.). I Peter 2:18ff. suffer for doing the right thing ... for Christ also suffered for you (Is 53 – suffering Servant applied to followers of Jesus. The sacrificial system flows not only into Jesus, but into our lives too, Col 1:13)

- The **Davidic Covenant** is fulfilled in the New Covenant – dynastic, monarchial
2 Samuel 7 – God will build him a house (dynasty) 7:12 – The Davidic Covenant
(not a Messianic promise here – because refers to him committing iniquity and
being corrected. 1 Kings 2:1 – keep His commands ... so that you may succeed..
so that the LORD may carry out His promise, IF (a condition, obligation to the
promise). Permanent promise with an ongoing obligation.
 - Jesus the Christ (i.e., Messiah) is the ultimate Davidic King, and the church
is His kingdom.
 - Christ is our Davidic King (Matt. 2:2, 3:2, 4:17, 23, 6:10, 11:25-27 [all
kingly authority has been given to Him, cf. 28:18], 21:1-11, Acts 1:6,
3:17-26)
 - He promoted a law appropriate to His kingdom (Matt 5:3, the “law” of
this kingdom in Matt. 5-7)
 - The church is His kingdom today (Acts 15:12-19, Rom. 11:5-32,
14:17, Col. 1:13, etc.).
 - At the appropriate time He will bring His kingship to full and obvious
manifestation on this earth (Rom 11:25-32, Rev. 19-20, esp. 20:6).

25. Future Hope

- Shadows and Cycles: The Best of All Possible Worlds is Yet to Come
- Isaiah and the End of Sorrow and Conflict
- Daniel and the Coming Kingdom

F. Conclusions

Students’ Personal Reflection: write about something you have learned that has been significant to you this week.

Students’ Personal Reflection: write about something you have learned that has been significant to you this week

*Group Discussions:

Every afternoon the students divide into groups of 5-10 to discuss and answer the question for that day (you do not all have to agree).

Someone in the group will take notes.

A representative from the group will present the results to the entire class.

The whole class tries formulate a few common points and practical applications.

ⁱ Donald E. Gowan, *Reclaiming the Old Testament for the Christian Pulpit*, Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976, 125, 126.