



# TRAINING TRACK

PART TWO

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY



Westlake Church Lausanne  
Rooted in the Gospel & Radical Transformation

# **Biblical Theology:**

## **The Grand Themes of the Bible**

### **A Brief Introduction to Biblical Theology**

Part One of this Training Track dealt with Systematic Theology. In Part Two, we go on to consider Biblical Theology.

‘Biblical’ Theology is different from ‘Systematic’ Theology. Systematic Theology gathers all that the Bible has to say about a certain subject – for example prayer, or the authority of scripture, or the character of God – and attempts to reconstruct the totality of what the Bible teaches on this subject.

Biblical Theology is different. It isn’t at odds with Systematic Theology, rather it is a different approach to studying the Bible. Instead of looking at a specific subject and then zooming in on all the details the Bible has to teach us on this subject, it takes a bird’s eye view. It attempts to discern what the great, over-arching themes of the Bible are: themes such as Creation; Fall; Redemption; Sacrifice; Promise; the Glory of God and so on, and then trace them through the Bible.

Biblical theology is important because it keeps issues, ourselves, and God in right perspective:

It should keep issues in perspective by keeping us from majoring on the minors – it keeps the central story line(s) of the Bible in view, and stops us getting lost down side-alleys.

Biblical Theology also helps to keep ourselves in right perspective. There is a temptation to believe that the Universe revolves around me as an individual, that God exists to bless me. This is perhaps especially prevalent in modern evangelicalism. If we approach the Bible with that mentality, we will have a very distorted view of its message. In keeping the Bible’s great themes before us, Biblical Theology helps us see that we are not the central point of the Bible – God is; God does not exist to bless me – I exist to glorify and reflect Him; neither the Universe nor the Bible revolves around me, I am just one of millions who find themselves caught up in God’s wonderful plan of redemption, that He purposed before the world began, for His own glory. So Biblical Theology helps us keep God and ourselves in right perspective.

In his book ‘According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible’<sup>1</sup>, Graham Goldsworthy writes that Biblical Theology:

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<sup>1</sup> Graham Goldsworthy, ‘According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible’ (IVP, 1991, p21-25).

- Gives us the means of dealing with problematic passages in the Bible by relating them to the one message of the Bible.
- Enables us to relate any Bible story to the whole message of the Bible, and therefore to ourselves.
- Shows the relationship of all parts of the Old Testament to the person and work of Jesus Christ and, therefore, to the Christian.
- Enables us to map out the unity of the Bible by looking at its message as a whole.
- Provides the basis for interpretation of any part of the Bible as God's word to us.

While there are different approaches, in this module we will use, primarily, Don Carson's book, 'The God Who is There'.<sup>2</sup> Carson highlights 14 great themes within the Biblical story, and we will deal with each one in turn:

1. The God Who Made Everything
2. The God Who Does Not Wipe Out Rebels
3. The God Who Writes His Own Agreements
4. The God Who Legislates
5. The God Who Reigns
6. The God Who Is Unfathomably Wise
7. The God Who Becomes a Human Being
8. The God Who Grants New Birth
9. The God Who Loves
10. The God Who Dies – and Lives Again
11. The God Who Declares The Guilty Just
12. The God Who Gathers and Transforms His People
13. The God Who Is Very Angry
14. The God Who Triumphs.

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<sup>2</sup> Don Carson, 'The God Who is There: Finding your place in God's Story.' (Baker, 2010).