

Introduction to Biblical Theology

THE GOSPEL IN THE BIBLE'S STORYLINE

Course Description

- This track of SoCM classes on Biblical Theology will take us through a two-year learning journey, where all participants will be encouraged to read through the entire Bible. We will begin with the NT for the first year and then read the OT in the second year through the lens of Jesus as the fulfilling Messiah of the nation of Israel. At the end of the course, all participants should be able to achieve the following learning outcomes:

Learning Outcomes

- Develop skills to read, interpret, and apply the Bible
- Gain an overall understanding of the primary message from each book of the Bible
- Trace and connect major doctrinal themes (e.g., the Gospel) within the historical flow of the text from OT to NT

Biblical Theology

- Biblical theology is the interpretation of Scripture, when the reader asks questions about God along the temporal flow of the Bible's storyline
- Example: How does the doctrine of the "Gospel" unfold itself in the Bible's storyline?
- Aim: To trace the development of a theme through the Scripture's storyline, and to determine the unique contribution of a particular book (e.g., Isaiah) to the whole of Scripture

Systematic Theology

- Systematic theology is the interpretation of Scripture, when the reader asks atemporal questions about God and his relation to his creation organized in categories
- Examples: What is God like? What is sin? How is one saved?
- Traditional Doctrinal Categories: God (Trinity), Man, Sin, Christology, Salvation, Sanctification, Ecclesiology, Eschatology

Relationship between BT and ST

- Diachronic: It asks temporal questions along the flow of the Bible's storyline concerning the history of redemption
- Reads the Bible inductively and descriptively to show its normative teaching
- Rationality according to literary genres
- What it meant
- Synchronic: It asks atemporal questions concerning God and his relationship to creation and organizes them in topics
- Rearticulates the Bible deductively and prescriptively to engage contemporary culture
- Integrates various rationalities to form doctrine
- What it means

Interdependence of Disciplines

- “While we distinguish it from other theological disciplines, such as systematics, historical theology, apologetics and practical theology, its relationship to these disciplines is one of interdependence... The mutuality of the disciplines can be seen in our coming to the task of exegesis with certain dogmatic presupposition about the nature and authority of the Bible... It seeks to understand the parts in relation to the whole” (Rosner 2000, 3)

How Big is Your Gospel?

- Paul describes God's promise to Abraham in Galatians 3:8:
- "Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles [the nations] by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you'" (cf. Gen 12:3)

Background of the Gospel

- Neither Jesus nor the apostles coined the term “gospel.” It was commonly used as part of the Roman system of emperor worship, in which the announcement of the “good news” of a royal heir’s birth or a new emperor’s accession to the throne
- The Septuagint translates the terms *euangelion* (gospel) and *euangelizomai* (to evangelize or speak good news) from the Hebrew root *basar*. The verb *basar* refers to “proclaiming good news,” such as the birth of a child (Jer 20:15), the choice of a king (1 Kgs 1:42), or a military victory (1 Sam 31:9)

The Gospel According to Isaiah

- The most important passages in the OT for the NT usage of “gospel” occur in Isa 40-66
- In particular, the term “gospel” appears in two important passages (40:9; 52:7)

The Gospel According to Isaiah

- “You who bring **good news** to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, ‘Here is your God!’” (Isa 40:9)
- “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring **good news**, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” (Isa 52:7)

The Gospel According to Isaiah

- In the context of these passages, a messenger bringing **good news** announces that God is coming to Jerusalem as a victorious king to deliver his people from Babylon's oppression
- The message of the "evangelizer" is that despite the apparent power of the enemy, it is God alone who rules: "Here is your God!" (Isa 40:9) and "Your God reigns!" (52:7)
- Deliverance was undeserved, and they were saved by God's grace

The Gospel According to Isaiah

- Due to sin, God promises that he will clothe his people in a righteousness that is not their own (61:10-11) when they come to him in faith and repentance (55:1, 7)
- God determines that the punishment for his people's sin will be executed, not on them, but on a divine servant-king appointed to be their substitute (Isa 52:13-53:12)
- Isa 52:13 and 61:1 identify this servant and king as the Messiah, with divine attributes (cf. Phil 2:9-11)

The Gospel According to Isaiah

- This servant king will be:
 - Pierced for their transgressions (53:5)
 - He will bear their iniquities, make a sin offering, and justify many (53:10-11)
 - He will die, be buried, but will see the light of life (53:11)
 - He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom (9:7)

Jesus Fulfilled the OT

- ²⁵ “He said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?’ ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Lu 24:25-27)

Christocentric Reading of the OT

- ⁴⁴ “He said to them, ‘this is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written **about me** in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.’
⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures” (Lu 24:44-45)

The Gospel According to Jesus

- His message of the KoG: “The KoG has come near. Repent and believe the good news” (Mk 1:15)
- Jesus cites Isa 61 in Lu 4:16-21
- The good news Jesus announced is just what Isaiah prophesied that God inaugurates his kingdom on earth in the Messiah-King, Jesus Christ
- Spiritual poor can enter the KoG by God’s grace and the work of the servant-king

The Gospel According to Paul

- Paul received the “gospel” by revelation from Jesus (Gal 1:12; 1 Cor 15:3)
- Sinners deserve God’s wrath (Rom 1:18)
- We cannot be saved by keeping the law (Gal 2:16), but the law makes us “conscious of sin” (Rom 3:20)
- Righteousness comes from Jesus “as a sacrifice of atonement” (Rom 3:25)
- We are justified by faith (Rom 3:28; 4:24-25)

The Gospel in Biblical Theology

- “The focus on the gospel presupposes a certain way of reading the Bible. There are those people who treat the Bible as a little narrow piece that gets you into the kingdom. Then come discipleship and training, which are detached from the gospel. In the Bible itself, the gospel is the big thing. It is the good news of what God has done and is doing in Christ Jesus, supremely through his death, resurrection, ascension, session at the Father’s right-hand, continuing to his return, the restoration of all things, the new heaven and the new earth, all grounded on the cross and the resurrection (1 Cor 15; Gal 3:7-9). This is very massive in its implications and bearings. From this come Christian ethics, Christian worldview, and frames of reference on how the church relates to culture. Focus on the gospel in the comprehensive sense is central to the Bible itself” (Carson 2013)

Conclusions

- We must not read Bible passages as “stand alone” texts, apart from their literary, grammatical, historical and theological contexts
- Additionally, we must read passages in the contexts of particular books, corpuses, testaments, and within the canonical development of the Bible’s storyline, before we do systematic theology and apply the Bible to our contemporary context
- In other words, the reader must determine the Bible’s intended meaning in its original contexts before expounding on its meaning for today