

Dr. David L. Mathewson, New Testament Theology, Session 1, Introduction

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This is Dr. Dave Mathewson on his course on New Testament Theology. This is session 1, Introduction.

The next several sessions we will spend looking at New Testament theology or, more specifically, New Testament biblical theology.

One of the questions we need to ask before we begin to look at New Testament theology is: what is New Testament theology or what is biblical theology? And I'll sort of use those terms in conjunction because, as you'll figure out, we're looking at the New Testament theology from the standpoint of biblical theology. What that means as well is that we will take into consideration the Old Testament as well as the New Testament because New Testament theology depends on how it develops themes that are developed and introduced in the Old Testament itself. So, the first question I want to ask is, what is biblical theology? Again, we look at New Testament theology as a part of or from the perspective of biblical theology.

But what is theology? Now, at first, that might seem an unnecessary question, as if there is an unbiblical theology or a non-biblical theology. But actually, the word biblical theology takes on a number of connotations that are important for understanding what it means by doing biblical theology or by doing New Testament theology. So, what is biblical theology? Well, most theologians claim to be biblical.

For example, if you were to peruse Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics, you would find the pages littered with references to New Testament and Old Testament texts. Or if you look at Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion, you will also recognize allusions to and quotations from numerous Old and New Testament texts. Or pick up any modern-day systematic theology, and you'll note a number of supporting references to Old and New Testament texts.

Are those biblical theologies because they refer to biblical texts? Are these biblical theologies because they are theologies saturated with Old and New Testament texts? So, from one perspective, one could say any theology that is based on the Bible or any theology that has as its primary topic the Bible or is supported by biblical references could be a biblical theology. But historically, biblical theology has come to mean something very different than that. And my goal is not to trace the history of biblical theology.

You can find that elsewhere. Instead, I want to simply ask the question, what do we mean by biblical theology when we begin to think about doing New Testament

theology? And specifically, what is the difference between biblical theology and some of these other things that we've mentioned, like modern-day systematic theologies or what you find in the Institutes of the Christian Religion or Karl Barth's Theology? And how does it differ from other disciplines, such as systematic theology? First of all, what is often known as systematic theology? That is what you usually find in most Bible doctrine classes or systematic theology classes or Theology 101 or whatever it's called in our colleges and seminaries. Systematic theology is usually a discipline that is based in its entirety upon scripture, but it's arranged logically, topically, and hierarchically.

That is, it is a non-temporal, or it is an atemporal discipline, or what some call a synchronic discipline. That is, it asks very broad questions. It's arranged according to categories that have been deemed important throughout the history of the church.

And it's again an ahistorical discipline. That is, it asks questions like, what is God like? Or what is the church? Or who is Jesus? Or what is the meaning of his death on the cross? What is the meaning of the resurrection of Christ? What does the Bible teach about sin? So, it's arranged according to topics that the church has deemed important and significant. But it asks the question of trying to synthesize what the entire scripture teaches on these given topics, which again are arranged logically and hierarchically and are historical.

That is, it's not paying attention to; when I say ahistorical, I mean it's not asking the question of what different authors intended or how a theme or concept gets developed throughout scripture necessarily. But again, it's asking broader questions. Who is God? What is God like? Who is Jesus Christ? What is sin? Et cetera, et cetera.

What is the church? What is its function? It gathers all the scriptures teaching on that topic and arranges it in a logical order to try to answer those questions. Now, there's a lot more that could be said about that. That may be a rather simplistic answer in one sense, but that's sort of what we know as Bible doctrine or traditional systematic theologies will do.

So, you pick up a systematic theology book, and you'll notice it gets arranged sometimes in different ways, but it'll have a section on scripture, what is scripture, on God, on the Trinity, on Jesus Christ, his deity, his work, on the Holy Spirit, on the church, et cetera, et cetera, on salvation. It simply deals with the different topics, those different topics, and what the Bible as a whole teaches on those and arranges accordingly. Also, systematic theology also tends to be geared more toward worldview formation as well.

Now, in contrast to that, and by contrast, I don't mean that it's in conflict with, but the discipline of biblical theology is actually difficult to pin down. A recent book that has come out by Klink and Lockett, two authors from Talbot Theological Seminary in

California in the United States, argues that there are five different kinds of or five different approaches to biblical theology from those that focus mainly historically on the meaning of text to those that are more, focus more on literary methods and those that focus more on theology, almost closer to systematic theology. And they argue that there are five at least five different approaches to biblical theology.

So, biblical theology is, in a sense, difficult to pin down, but there are a couple of things that could be said about it that I think distinguishes biblical theology from other disciplines, especially the discipline of systematic theology. For example, biblical theology, like systematic theology, is based on the entirety of scripture. It is based on scripture as a whole, ultimately the Old and New Testament.

However, what seems to distinguish biblical theology is that it follows the Bible's redemptive historical storyline or plot line. It's sensitive to the literary genres of the Old and New Testaments. It's sensitive to the author's unique emphases throughout the Old and New Testaments.

It uses categories that emerge from scripture itself. It's more temporal and diachronic. That is, again, it focuses on how the biblical-theological themes develop through the Old and New Testament, how they emerge in the Old Testament, and how they find their climax and fulfillment in the New Testament itself.

Now, when we think about the relationship between the two, biblical theology is sometimes seen as a bridge or a sort of necessary step to doing systematic theology. That is, biblical theology is what can keep systematic theology from being merely proof-texting for different doctrines or different theological themes. Again, some have called biblical theology a bridge discipline for that reason.

Likewise, biblical theology must be based on sound exegesis, exegesis of individual texts, exegesis of the text in the historical context and paying attention to what the author intended, and as we already said, being sensitive to the different literary types that are found in the Old and New Testament. So that's sort of what biblical theology is in comparison and contrast to systematic theology. Systematic theology being more asking kind of odd, temporal, broader questions about what the Bible teaches on any given topic or theme, whereas biblical theology seems to focus more on the Bible's storyline, the Bible's plotline, how various themes that emerge from the text itself seem to develop across the Old and into the New Testament, and paying attention to the emphases of different authors in the historical context, and paying attention to different literary types, etc.

We'll talk more about that. Hopefully, that'll become clearer as we talk about some of the issues in New Testament theology or biblical theology. So, I want to move to that.

What are some of the important issues when we think about doing a biblical or a New Testament theology? One of the important issues is that people and students that do biblical theology or New Testament theology are to ask the question, is there a center or is there a dominant theme that accounts for all the diversity of themes one finds in the Old and New Testament? In other words, is there a center? Is there a center around which everything can be organized? Is there a dominant theme that seems to be the theme that accounts for everything else? Kind of like if you look at a bicycle tire, the hub would be the main theme, and all the spokes that connect to it would be all the other themes that find their center and find their focal point in that hub or in that main theme. Various persons and times in history have suggested different centers or different themes that they think emerge as the dominant theme around which New Testament theology should be structured. One can think, for example, of the Reformation period with Martin Luther, when justification by faith seemed to be the dominant theme of the New Testament around which everything else revolved.

The famous German theologian and New Testament scholar Rudolf Bultmann said that the dominant theme was an existential message. Once you demythologized the entire New Testament and stripped it of all the mythological elements, the primary message was an existential one. Others, for example, George Eldon Ladd, in New Testament theology back in the 1970s who was very influential, said that salvation history or the history of redemption, God's plan for redemptive history, was the dominant theme.

Others have suggested that the kingdom of God is the main theme that unites all the others in the New Testament. Covenant, even going back to the Old Testament, Walter Eichrodt, in theology of the Old Testament, argued that was one who argued for covenant as a dominant theme. Recently, actually recently but in a string of articles and works leading up to his main New Testament theology book, his kind of magnum opus, Greg Beale has argued that new creation is the dominant theme that unites all the others.

Some have argued that salvation is the main theme. Ralph Martin, a New Testament scholar, along with some others, has argued that reconciliation is the dominant theme. Thomas Schreiner at Southern Baptist Seminary in the United States argues that God magnifying himself through the person of Jesus Christ is the ultimate goal or purpose of New Testament theology.

However, he also argued that the kingdom of God could be the main theme of the New Testament. Back in the early 80s, an author named Gerhard Hasel argued for what he called a multiplex approach. That is, there is no one dominant theme to outmaneuver everyone else.

Some have suggested that God is the dominant theme, but who would want to argue with that? So, there has been little agreement as to whether there is a center. That is, is there a dominant theme, and if there is one, what is it? New Testament scholars have disagreed as to what that is. One possible proposal, but perhaps the variety suggests that it's illegitimate or even unnecessary to try to find a dominant theme.

Maybe we should simply allow a number of themes to stand in relationship with each other and not try to make any one of them the main one. One possible proposal that again may not be the dominant theme but seems to account for a number of themes that we do find, especially in the New Testament and the Old Testament as well, is that God is gathering the people. God is creating a people who will be his people, and he will be their God and live in their midst.

To boil that down, God is gathering together a people in whose midst he will live and dwell. Another issue related to that is there is a center. Is there a unified theology in the New Testament, or do we find a variety of theologies within the New Testament that even conflict with each other, as some would say? When you read the New Testament, you find that it is comprised of such a diversity of materials and such a divergency of themes that some argue that there are divergent again or even contradictory theologies. Others have argued, though, that there's a diversity, but there is a unifying thread or sort of an overarching narrative that unites it all together and runs through the whole thing.

Those that would, our previous point about the center, is there a center? Those who would argue for a center would argue that there are no contradictory theologies or divergent theologies but that the center unites them all and binds them all together. In other words, and I'm going to assume, part of what we have to do in the rest of this course is to argue and demonstrate that, but at this point, I can only suggest that I will assume that there is diversity but one that is complementary and not contradictory. That is, if one views the Bible as God's revelation of himself in history, in acts in history that climax in the person of Jesus Christ, if one views the Bible as God's revelation of himself, it seems to require that we do have, in the midst of diversity, still have a unified theology or unified perspective on God's revelation of himself.

If there's one author who ultimately stands behind all of the Old and New Testaments, then we must somehow account for that unity. Again, this is not the place to try to argue that, but hopefully, the rest of the course will be able to demonstrate how the Bible itself, the New Testament, shows and demonstrates a unity that owes itself to God's revelation of himself throughout the Old and climaxing in the New Testament in the person of Jesus Christ. Another issue is the locus of New Testament theology.

Where do we go to find material for doing New Testament theology? And once more, without arguing at length, I would argue that the 66 books of the Old and New Testament canon that the church confesses as its scripture and as the word of God, and as the authoritative revelation of God to his people constitutes the basis of the canonical limits for doing New Testament theology. So, on the one hand, we're happy to draw in other texts and documents from some of the Jewish literature and other New Testament literature to help form background information to help understand Old and New Testament documents more clearly. Ultimately, our biblical theology emerges from and is based on the Old and New Testament canon that the church confesses as its scripture, as the word of God.

Along with that, Germans were quite fond of talking about a whole biblical theology or what some have called a pan-biblical theology. That is, our theology must ultimately account for the entire canon of scripture. So even though the burden of this course is primarily New Testament theology, we cannot think about New Testament theology without incorporating the Old Testament and doing an entire or whole biblical theology and understanding how the Old Testament prepares for and how the dominant themes that emerge from the Old Testament then find their climax and fulfillment in the New Testament.

Likewise, I will discuss how the New Testament brings the Old Testament to its completion and fulfillment. So, the locus for doing New Testament theology is ultimately, or any biblical theology, is ultimately the entirety of the Old and New Testament canon and any theology must be a whole biblical theology, I'd argue, for one that takes into account the entire canon of scripture, Old and New Testament alike. So, as we continue throughout this course, you'll note that at least some of our time is going to be spent looking at the Old Testament and developing Old Testament themes and motifs in preparation to see how those get developed and how they find their fulfillment and climax in the New Testament, in God's revelation through the person of Jesus Christ.

So, the first issue then is, is there a center to New Testament theology? And I suggested that there's been little consensus as to whether there is one dominant theme that emerges. Second, is there a unified New Testament theology, or do we find divergent and contradictory theologies in the New Testament? Again, I would argue that what we find in the New Testament is, yes, a diversity, but one that has a unity, one that is complementary in light of the God who reveals himself in acts of history that find their fulfillment in the New Testament. Then, the locus for doing theology is the 66 books of the canon of scripture that the church confesses its scripture, which consists of what we call the Old and the New Testament.

Another final issue is the issue of history. Since the Bible claims to record God's mighty and redemptive acts for his people in history, a New Testament theology cannot be divorced from history. So we're not only interested in developing a

narrative theology, a theology of story but instead, what we have is access to those events in the Old and New Testament.

So, history is important because we claim and confess that God has revealed himself historically in redemptive acts on behalf of his people, which we now find testified to in the Old and the New Testaments. Now, one question when it comes to asking about how we go about doing a New Testament theology: What's this course going to look like? How's it going to be set up? How do we cover this material? There've been a number of ways that, in the past, New Testament theology of theologies has been organized. And my intent is not to survey all of those but just to give you a sampling to kind of provide a backdrop for what we're going to do.

First of all, one possibility is to use the categories of systematic theology. We talked earlier about systematic theology and how it utilizes categories that the church has deemed significant and has organized its theology and thinking around, such as God and Trinity and Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, anthropology, sin, pneumatology, those sorts of church, et cetera, et cetera, scripture, and to organize a New Testament theology around that. And there's been a number of attempts to do that.

I think of Donald Guthrie's *Older New Testament Theology*, a shorter work by Leon Morris written several years ago that primarily more or less takes traditional systematic theologies, the kind of categories you'd find in a systematic theology text or a doctoral statement, and arranges the New Testament teaching around those.

Another possibility or way of organizing a theology is to examine individual authors throughout the New Testament and to ask the question of what those authors and their books, what theological emphasis comes or emerges from those. I think, for example, of the theology by George Eldon Ladd that we mentioned a while ago, that basically, although again he sees a dominant theme, redemptive history or kingdom of God, is his theology is arranged according to the gospels and the Synoptics and then the Gospel of John, the Acts, the Pauline letters, et cetera, et cetera. Or a fairly recent work by Frank Thielman produced by Zondervan that again arranges his according to individual books, starting with Matthew all the way through Revelation, simply asks the question of what dominant theological themes, biblical-theological themes, emerge in the different New Testament books.

I also think of the very important and significant work by I. Howard Marshall, in his *New Testament theology*, likewise arranges the material around individual New Testament authors but also consistently relates those to each other. So, he keeps examining individual books and authors but then keeps going back and relating everything so that at the end of it, you do have an idea of how all the books relate to each other and how everything fits together. A recent book by Thomas Schreiner called *The King and His Beauty* is a biblical theology of the Old and New Testament, but what it does is it just treats each individual book.

Or there might be some places where he combines a couple of them, especially in the Old Testament, but asks the question of what the dominant theological themes emerge in the New Testament or Old Testament books? What do they contribute to our understanding of biblical theology? So that's a second one. A third one is to trace certain ideas or themes or even a single theme as they are developed throughout the New Testament. One example of this would be Thomas Schreiner's New Testament theology, in which he takes a number of dominant theological themes and develops them.

So, it's not treating each New Testament book but starting with themes and then gathering the biblical material from the New Testament, including how they contribute to and what they say about those themes. Or a recent book by Scott Hafemann and Paul House on Central Themes in Biblical Theology, which takes a number of dominant themes like covenant or church or law or salvation history, and once more asks atonement, asks the question of how those themes get developed across both the Old and New Testament. Also, there's been a series that Don Carson at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in the States is now editing in the new Studies in Biblical Theology, I think is the name of the series, and it takes all sorts of different themes related to the church or salvation or wealth and poverty and all types of different biblical-theological themes and develops a biblical theology with a book attributed to each of those themes.

So, one very popular way of doing a New Testament theology is by taking a theme or the dominant biblical-theological themes and tracing them in the New Testament or in both the Old and New Testaments.

The fourth approach is to trace a storyline from the main foci or the main themes that are developed in the Old and New Testaments, from promise to fulfillment. A recent book by Charles Scobie called *The Ways of Our God* is basically written like this.

It takes dominant themes, but it asks how they relate to each other, almost looking at a story and how it develops. Scobie's work could actually go with number three as well, tracing certain ideas or themes as they're developed through the Old and New Testament, but it could also be put under number four, looking at all these themes and how they relate to each other as contributing to a story or narrative that moves from the Old Testament into the New Testament. Probably the best example of this approach is Gregory Beal's work, kind of climaxing in his recent book, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, which examines how the Old Testament gets developed in and fulfilled in the New Testament.

Behind this approach is an intentional examination or assumption of how the Old Testament and New Testament fit together in terms of promise and fulfillment. So

how do those Old Testament themes emerge starting in the book of Genesis, how do they develop through the Old Testament then finally, how do they find their climax in the person of Jesus Christ, and then ending with the book of Revelation, how they find their ultimate climax in the new creation. So those are four different approaches.

They're not all exclusive. There can be overlap between them. Again, some of these could easily go into one or more categories, but again, sometimes you find works using the traditional categories of systematic theology.

But more commonly, you'll find them examining individual authors or books and their dominant theological themes and emphases. Often, you'll find New Testament theologies tracing certain themes, or maybe one theme or major themes, and then how those get developed in the New Testament or from the Old into the New.

Finally, you might find New Testament theologies tracing a storyline, a storyline from the main themes that emerge in the Old Testament and New Testament, and how, in the scheme of promise and fulfillment, they find their fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ.

Now, I would suggest that all of these approaches probably have validity, and I'm not here to try to argue for the importance or the validity of one of these approaches over the other. But as far as this course is concerned, the approach I'm going to take is that I will examine what I think are the dominant or main themes that emerge throughout the Old and New Testament in terms of how they are part of the redemptive storyline that finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. That is, I will examine based on my own study of the Old and New Testament, but also look at what other New Testament theologies have identified as dominant themes to take those themes and examine how they emerge and develop through the Old Testament, but then how they find their fulfillment in, and how they get developed in the New Testament in light of fulfillment in Christ.

So, looking at how these themes get developed across the Old Testament. Hopefully, we'll be able to pay some attention to individual authors and different corpora of literature and what they contribute to those themes, and how they develop those themes as well. So that's sort of how we'll approach New Testament theology.

If I were to define, and I don't know that I want to try to define New Testament theology, but if I were to maybe come up with a description, I might say something like this. New Testament theology is the study of God's redemptive activity on behalf of his people and all of creation as it unfolds throughout the Old and New Testament, finding its climactic fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ. Let me say that again.

One way that New Testament theology could be defined or described that I, again, I find consistent with a lot of approaches to New Testament theology is New Testament theology is the study of God's redemptive activity on behalf of his people and all creation as it unfolds throughout the Old Testament and New Testament and finds its climactic fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ. So, this also includes an understanding of how that theology gets contextualized in certain New Testament documents and certain New Testament authors. It also illuminates how a different, given book fits within the broader theological unity of the New Testament.

One other important feature of New Testament theology that we need to keep in mind is Howard Marshall, in his important work on New Testament theology, reminds us that New Testament theology is also missional theology. That is, New Testament theology is about both the mission of Jesus that Marshall argues, it's both about the mission of Jesus to inaugurate God's kingdom and call people to respond, but it's also about the mission of his followers to proclaim the lordship of Jesus Christ and to call people to respond in faith and complete obedience and commitment to the person of Jesus Christ. So, New Testament theology shapes the ongoing mission of the church.

Another way of putting it is New Testament theology is not primarily or at least just an academic discipline. It's not a discipline reserved for the university or the seminary, but New Testament theology is a discipline that should take place within the context of the church. So, the question is, what is the proper context for doing biblical theology? Ultimately it is the life of the church.

So, New Testament theology is ultimately missional. It's a theology about the mission of Jesus inaugurating the kingdom, calling people to respond. It's also a theology that relates to the mission of his followers who proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, who call people to respond in faith and complete commitment and obedience to the person of Jesus Christ.

So, a theology that falls short of that is probably not a New Testament theology, at least in terms of what we find in the New Testament. Now, just a couple of further questions related to New Testament theology. First of all, how do we address the concern of when we read the New Testament? Basically, what it seems that we're doing is extracting a theology from the New Testament that does not look like anything we find in any specific New Testament text.

In other words, at the end of the day, what we have is a construction, a teaching that we call New Testament theology, but we don't actually find that in any one New Testament document. Instead, what we have is kind of a synthesis or a putting together of what we find in a number of places. So, one possible criticism of New Testament theology is, are we in danger of replacing the actual teaching of New

Testament texts with a theology that supposedly lies behind it? Now I would suggest, though, that a couple of things.

Number one, the fact that we have before us a canon of scripture consisting of the Old and New Testament almost begs us to do this. It almost begs that we attempt to ask what unifies this. What helps to put this all together? Is there an overarching unity that links the canon of scripture together? Also, this canon then discloses a theology that actually informs the different authors. It helps us to see how theology has a textually specific application.

That is, New Testament theology helps us to reflect back on the text to see how it fits into this overall unity or this overall story that we find within the New Testament canon. So, do you see what I'm suggesting is that we don't just do New Testament theology for the sake of constructing something that replaces the teaching of the New Testament? Instead, what we find is it is a tool that helps us to reflect back on it and to go back to the New Testament and helps us to see its contribution and its place and the underlying assumptions that inform what the authors write and to help us to understand that more clearly.

One other issue is whether the New Testament is primarily descriptive. Very early on in the movement, and again, I'm not interested in getting into the history of biblical theology or New Testament theology. Others have done that, and you can read about that. But very early on, when biblical theology began to emerge as a discipline, it was argued that biblical theology was merely descriptive.

That is, it simply described what biblical authors believed. It was simply there to describe the thought processes or the religious beliefs of individual authors. And certainly, there is some truth to this.

As we've seen, biblical theology primarily, or hopefully, emerges from the New Testament itself. The New Testament and exegesis of the New Testament text hopefully control the categories and control how we do biblical theology. But on the other hand, I would suggest to you that New Testament theology is not only descriptive but, as theologians say, is also in some sense prescriptive, in that we confess that the New Testament theology is the story of God acting redemptively on behalf of his people, and that the documents of the Old and New Testament testify to that working in the form of the authoritative revelation of God to his people.

And so, it's in the Bible's own plot line or storyline that we encounter the God who orchestrates the story and who calls, as Howard Marshall says, New Testament theology is also missional theology. We find in it a theology where we are confronted with the God of history, who acts on behalf of his people, who has revealed himself climactically in the person of Jesus Christ, who calls for our obedience, who calls us to proclaim the lordship of Jesus Christ throughout all of creation, and who asks for our

complete commitment and obedience. So, in that sense, New Testament theology is not only descriptive, although it is, but we would also say New Testament theology is prescriptive.

The last thing I want to say by way of introduction to Biblical theology, or New Testament theology more specifically, is it's important to understand. We've alluded to this a little bit, and we'll allude to it several more times. In one sense, the way we handle the Biblical theological themes as they get fulfilled and developed in the New Testament will be related to this, and this is nothing new. This has been developed and has been important for those who've done Biblical theology, but the Biblical theology needs to be understood as part of the framework of what is often called promise and fulfillment, or already but not yet, or the now and the not yet, or the eschatological tension between what is true but what is not yet reached its consummation. That is, when you read the New Testament carefully in relationship to the Old Testament, but when you read the New Testament, you find that God's promises from the Old Testament are fulfilled in tension that, again, scholars often characterize as already but not yet, and there are other terms that are often used, but the idea is that with the coming of Jesus Christ, with the person of Jesus Christ first of all, and then his church as well, the new people, the new community that he forms, the fulfillment of God's promises find an initial already fulfillment.

That is, Christ brings to fulfillment the promises of the Old Testament in history, in himself, and in his mighty acts and deeds in history, but also in the people that he gathers. But that fulfillment is not exhaustive but merely anticipates and prepares for the ultimate and final fulfillment that one finds in the new creation and in the eschatological consummation that one reads about, for example, in the book of Revelation, especially the latter chapters and elsewhere. For example, if this is a new concept to you, one finds this most clearly in Jesus' teaching in the kingdom of God, and this is kind of where this thinking of the already but not yet, the now but not yet, or inauguration of the promises but the consummation yet to come, kind of got its start in Jesus' teaching in the kingdom of God.

When one reads the Gospels, one finds that Jesus teaches that in his own person, in his own teaching, his own ministry, the kingdom of God promised in the Old Testament. A day when God would set up his kingdom and reign as king through a messianic figure, a son of David, would rule over all creation; Jesus seems to claim that that has now become a reality. In Jesus' own person by responding to Jesus' message and his own person, one could already enter God's kingdom.

One could already be part of this kingdom. So, the kingdom, in a sense, was already present. Jesus could say things like, if I cast out demons by the name of Beelzebub, then by whose power do you cast them out? Matthew chapter 12.

But then Jesus says, but if I cast out demons in the power of the Holy Spirit, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. So apparently, the kingdom of God was already present in the ministry and in the person of Jesus Christ. Yet, on the other hand, we find Jesus clearly teaching that the kingdom of God had not yet arrived.

It seemed to be a future reality. It seemed to be something that had not yet reached its consummation and fulfillment. So, one option is to say, well, these are conflicting or contradictory accounts.

But a better one, a better option, is to suggest, no, the New Testament develops this way. In fact, the entire New Testament is structured according to this tension between the fact that the promises of God found in the Old Testament find their fulfillment initially and in the inaugurated form already, first of all, in the person of Jesus Christ and his teaching and ministry.

Second, in the group of followers that he gathers around him and the new people of God, the church that he establishes.

But this only anticipates a greater fulfillment, a greater reality where God will fulfill his promises in consummated form and perfect form in the new creation in the future. And so, as we examine these different themes, as we work through the different biblical-theological themes, especially New Testament themes, and even as we look at their emergence and development in the Old Testament and into the New, we will look at them and must keep in mind this tension between the fact that these have already been fulfilled in Jesus and the people that he's created in anticipation of the greater consummated fulfillment in the future. So then, what we intend to do in the rest of this course is to examine the New Testament primarily in terms of the dominant themes that I think emerge from a study of the New Testament and Old Testament in light of its fulfillment of the Old Testament.

Examining other New Testament theologies and the themes that they have observed and highlighted will form the basis for this course. That will form the primary themes that we'll look at. Now, we can't, of course, be exhaustive and look at every possible theme, but I've chosen what I think are the dominant ones, again, that emerge from the study of the New Testament in light of its Old Testament background and other New Testament theologies.

And we'll look at those themes in terms of both how they emerge from the Old Testament, how they might develop in the Old Testament, and then how they find their climactic fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ and his followers and then in the ultimate consummation, the new creation. And at the same time we'll look at those themes as they relate to each other as part of a try to put them together as part of an ongoing story, as part of a plot line or storyline of God redemptively revealing himself, redemptively working out the fulfillment of his promises in both

the Old and New Testament. Now, in preparation for looking at the New Testament theology, as I said, I think the place to start is with a whole biblical theology.

That is, by going back to the Old Testament itself and noting how these themes emerge in the Old Testament and how they, in a sense, are developed in the Old Testament. Although we won't be able to spend nearly as much time with that, and those of you who are New Testament students may find that that is the least satisfying part of these lectures. But again, our focus is primarily on the New Testament.

But we can't do that without looking at the Old Testament and how those themes emerged and how they developed. So, what I want to do in the next couple of sections is we will look at, starting right now, in the next section or two, look at the Old Testament, the beginning of what I think is biblical theology and the starting point. And that is the first couple of chapters of the book of Genesis.

Again, my intention is not to enter into an exegesis of this text and answer all our questions or look at it in any detail but simply to consider how the first two or three chapters of Genesis might be the starting point for doing biblical theology, even a New Testament theology, and how at least most of these themes that we will examine begin to emerge from and begin to get developed in the first three chapters. So, you'll notice Genesis 1-3 begins with, in the beginning. So perhaps we can take that as not only the place to begin the Bible and its story but in the beginning as the place to begin a biblical theology.

So again, Genesis 1-3 is the beginning of the Bible storyline and probably introduces the major biblical-theological themes that we're going to find throughout the rest of Scripture that get developed in the Old Testament, but again, find their climax and fulfillment in the New Testament. Although we'll look at other themes as well. Once more, let me reiterate what I'm not going to do at Genesis. We're not going to talk about the age of the earth or the creation-evolution debate.

This is not going to be a detailed exegesis of the Old Testament text found in Genesis 1-3. We're not going to ask questions about the level of literalness or the level of metaphors or the debate between literal and figurative days. We're not going to ask the question of the origin of evil or a host of other questions that are very important and significant that we either don't have time for, are not equipped to deal with, or aren't as relevant to our understanding of biblical theology, especially New Testament theology.

So let me just say then, starting with Genesis 1-3, let me just highlight a number of features that hopefully will prepare the way for understanding the dominant biblical-theological themes that find their way into the New Testament and also those themes that I think emerge naturally from chapters 1-3. Genesis 1-3 then begins with

God as the sovereign creator of all that exists, suggesting that creation owes its very existence to God, who simply speaks it into being by his powerful word. Again, I'm not going to go into detail about the evolution creation debate or whether these are literal days or anything else because I think the primary emphasis and focus of chapter 1 is, as the sovereign creator of all that is, God simply speaks creation into existence.

And just as kind of an aside, if you think about this in terms of the original author, the original readers who are prepared, the Israelites preparing to go into the land, wondering, based on everything they've been through so far, wondering if God will really keep his promises and if God will really give them the land. The answer to that is found in the first couple of chapters of Genesis. Yes, God can keep his promises because God speaks, and things happen.

God simply speaks, and things come into existence. What God says comes about. So yes, God will keep his promises.

If God spoke the world into existence, if God spoke by his powerful word and things came into existence, certainly God will keep his promises to his people, especially the promise of giving them the land, which is what we find God creating in Genesis chapter 1. So, in Genesis 1, creation emerges in six days, whether you take this as more literal or metaphorical, in response to God's creative word. Again, I don't want to reflect on how this fits into science, though I would suggest that science and the creation account here are not at odds with each other. It's just that I don't see Genesis 1 through 3 answering all those kinds of questions that we often have. But instead, the emphasis is on God as the sovereign creator of everything that exists that simply speaks the world into existence.

As another aside, one thing I find interesting is that Genesis 1 begins with God speaking creation into existence. And when you go to the very end of the Bible, in Revelation chapter 21, verse 5, in only the second place in the book of Revelation where God actually speaks, the second place he actually speaks, we find this. He who is seated on the throne said, behold, I am making everything new.

So, the Bible begins and ends with God in Genesis 1, speaking creation into existence by his powerful word. And then, in Revelation 21, verse 5 ends with God speaking the new creation into existence through his powerful word. So, Genesis 1 then, as we'll see in the next section, begins to, I think, surface the dominant biblical-theological themes that will develop through the Old Testament and find their climax in the New Testament.

But it begins with God as the sovereign creator of all that exists and all creation owing its existence to an all-powerful God who speaks creation into being.

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson on his course on New Testament Theology. This is session 1, Introduction.