

## Dr. David Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Session 26, Theological Approaches to Interpretation Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

### 1. Abstract of Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Session 26, Theological Approaches to Interpretation, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt from Dr. Dave Mathewson's hermeneutics course explains theological interpretation of the Bible. **It emphasizes reading the Old and New Testaments together**, viewing them as a unified, coherent narrative of God's redemptive work. **Theological analysis**, the lecture argues, should consider the historical context while also recognizing the **canonical context and Christological focus** of scripture. The lecture suggests that understanding the Bible theologically involves identifying major themes, tracing their development, and observing how individual texts contribute to the overarching story of God's plan for creation and humanity. Finally, the lecture provides examples of how to apply this approach using 2 Samuel 7.

**2. 18 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Session 26 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Introduction & Languages → Introductory Series → Hermeneutics).**



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### 3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture excerpts, including relevant quotes.

#### Briefing Document: Theological Analysis of Scripture

##### Introduction

This document summarizes Dr. Mathewson's lecture on theological analysis in biblical interpretation. The lecture emphasizes moving beyond historical and literary analysis to understand scripture within its theological context. This approach acknowledges the Bible as the inspired Word of God and seeks to understand how individual texts contribute to the overarching narrative of God's redemptive work.

##### Key Themes and Principles

###### 1. Theological Nature of Scripture:

- The Bible is more than a historical document; it is "highly theological" and must be read in a theological manner.
- As "scripture for the church," the Bible testifies to God's redemptive dealings with his people and his revelation of himself.
- Quote: *"Therefore the Old and New Testaments are more than, though not less than, they are more than simply historical documents. They are more than just documents written and produced in a specific historical setting, but they are also highly theological and therefore we must ultimately read the Bible in a theological manner."*

###### 1. Canonical Context:

- The ultimate context for interpreting any biblical text is the entire canon of Scripture (Old and New Testaments).
- The Old and New Testaments are conjoined and stand in relationship to each other, forming a unity.
- Quote: *"So the Bible as it stands and as we possess it consists of the Old and New Testament that now stand in relationship with each other and in a sense then provide the entire context in which any given Old Testament book is to be understood."*

### 1. **Unity and Coherence of Scripture:**

- As God's word, scripture possesses an essential unity and coherence.
- The canon provides the broad theological framework for understanding each individual book.
- While there is diversity of authors, literary types, and perspectives, they all contribute to the unified message.
- The Old and New Testaments do not contradict each other.
- Quote: *"So that doing theological analysis, at least from a Christian perspective, understands that the Old and New Testament texts are not at odds with each other. They do not contradict each other."*
- This stance contrasts with post-modern interpretations that emphasize contradictory voices and reject a "meta-story".

### 1. **Canonical Relationship (Promise and Fulfillment):**

- The Old and New Testaments stand in a relationship of promise and fulfillment.
- The Old Testament anticipates the final revelation in Jesus Christ.
- Quote: *"The Old Testament is seen as anticipatory of the final climactic revelation in the person of Jesus Christ."*
- The scriptures testify to God's ongoing redemptive acts in history.

### 1. **Overarching Biblical Story:**

- The Bible tells a story rooted in creation, where God creates a people and enters a covenant with them.
- Sin interrupts this story, leading to God choosing Israel for redemption, promising them a land, and dwelling with them.
- This story reaches its climax in Jesus Christ, whose death and resurrection begin to fulfill God's intentions from creation, and who inaugurates a new people who spread His rule.
- Ultimately, the story culminates in a new creation with renewed heavens and earth.

- Quote: *"So given this overarching narrative, or overarching story, or these overarching theological themes, theological interpretation then asks, how does each part fit in with and contribute to this whole?"*

#### 1. **Christocentric Focus:**

- The climax of God's redemptive activity is found in Jesus Christ: his teaching, death, and resurrection.
- New Testament authors interpreted the Old Testament through the lens of Jesus Christ, seeing him as the fulfillment of scripture.
- Quote: *"So theological analysis will ultimately demonstrate how everything finds its fulfillment in the person of Christ, in His life, His teaching, His death, and His resurrection."*
- Examples of this include Jesus as the son of David and Abraham, the ultimate sacrifice, the final high priest, the Passover Lamb, and the one who inaugurates a new covenant and new creation.

#### 1. **Importance of History:**

- Scripture testifies to God's activity in history.
- This approach acknowledges God's supernatural intervention into history, and is rooted in past acts of God.
- Theological analysis acknowledges the historical context, but it also makes room for the supernatural intervention of God.
- This approach tempers both historical criticism by making room for the supernatural, and literary/post-modern approaches which may neglect the historicity of the events described in scripture.
- Quote: *"So however much a post-modern approach serves to chasten pride in interpretation, and remind us of our limitations, it still reminds us of the need to understand, and attempt to uncover the meaning of God's historical acts, on behalf of his people, his mighty acts in history, as the creator, and the ruler of the entire world."*

### 1. Use of Biblical Themes and Terms:

- Theological analysis begins with the major themes and terms found in the Bible itself (e.g., creation, covenant, redemption, kingdom, priesthood).
- This is in contrast to "systematic theology," which uses broader categories of philosophical inquiry.
- Biblical theology traces these themes throughout the Old and New Testaments, recognizing how they develop.
- Quote: *"So a biblical theology, or a theological analysis of the biblical text, begins with the terms and the themes that emerge from the text itself, again, rather than thinking systematic theologically."*

### Steps in Theological Analysis

1. **Apply Sound Principles of Interpretation:** Understand the text in its historical, cultural, and literary context, considering authorial intent and original meaning.
2. **Identify Major Theological Themes:** Recognize key themes and terms within the text (e.g., creation, covenant, blessing).
3. **Development of Themes in the Text:** Explore how these themes are developed within the text, and recognize the historical setting.
4. **Fit within the Canonical Story:** Consider how the text fits into the broader narrative of God's redemptive work, from creation to the fulfillment in Christ.
5. **Contribution to Church's Theological Reflection:** (Briefly) - Understand how the interpretation of the text might contribute to the church's larger theological understanding.

### Example of Theological Analysis: 2 Samuel 7

- **Themes:** Temple imagery, kingship (Davidic monarchy), covenant, seed/descendants of David.
- **Historical Context:** God's promise to establish David's throne forever.
- **Canonical Fit:** Allusions to Genesis 12 (Abrahamic promise) and Genesis 1-2 (Eden).
- Provides backdrop for prophetic expectations of restoration tied to Davidic kingship.

- Fulfillment in Jesus Christ as the ultimate Davidic king and through his people.
- Quote: *"...2 Samuel 7 also provides the backdrop for much of the prophetic expectation of restoration... the prophets over and over anticipating a time when God will restore his people. But usually God's restoration of his people in the Old Testament is always seen in terms of God restoring the Davidic throne."*

## **Conclusion**

Theological analysis of scripture is essential for Christians. It acknowledges the divine nature of scripture while recognizing the need for sound interpretation, historical awareness, and understanding the Bible as one unified story that points toward Jesus Christ. By using this approach, one can see how individual texts fit into the larger canonical narrative of God's redemptive work, and be better able to live in light of that understanding.

## 4. Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Session 26, Theological Approaches to Interpretation

### Theological Interpretation of Scripture: A Study Guide

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the main idea behind theological interpretation of scripture?
2. How does recognizing the Bible as "scripture" influence its interpretation?
3. What is meant by the "canonical context" of biblical interpretation?
4. What are two important relationships between the Old and New Testaments in theological interpretation?
5. How does the concept of the unity and diversity of scripture affect interpretation?
6. How is Jesus Christ considered the climax of God's redemptive activity?
7. How does theological interpretation relate to the historical context of scripture?
8. What does it mean to say that theological interpretation is "Christologically focused"?
9. What is the difference between biblical theology and systematic theology?
10. What are the steps for interpreting a text theologically?

#### Answer Key

1. Theological interpretation of scripture emphasizes that the Bible is more than just a historical document; it is the inspired Word of God and should be interpreted within a theological context, recognizing its religious nature and God's redemptive work.
2. Calling the Bible "scripture" signifies it is not just a historical document but a religious text, the Word of God for the Church, testifying to God's redemptive acts, thus requiring a theological interpretation, not just a historical one.
3. The "canonical context" refers to understanding any specific book or passage of the Bible within the context of the entire 66 books of the Old and New

Testaments, recognizing that the whole canon forms the ultimate context for interpretation.

4. First, the Old and New Testaments have a relationship of promise and fulfillment, where the Old Testament anticipates the revelation in Jesus Christ. Second, they are a unified testimony to God's redemptive acts throughout history.
5. While recognizing that individual books have diverse authors, literary styles, and historical contexts, theological interpretation understands that they all contribute to the unified message of God's redemptive work and are not contradictory.
6. Jesus Christ is seen as the climax of God's redemptive activity because he is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, God incarnate, and through his death and resurrection, the redemption promised to humanity and creation has begun.
7. Theological interpretation acknowledges the importance of the historical context of the Bible but goes beyond it to recognize God's intervention in history. It accepts supernatural events, like the incarnation and resurrection, while recognizing the historical framework in which these events took place.
8. To say that theological interpretation is "Christologically focused" means that all of Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, is understood as ultimately pointing to and finding its fulfillment in the person, life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
9. Biblical theology begins with the terms and themes that emerge from the biblical text itself and traces their development, focusing on the overarching story of God's redemptive activity. Systematic theology, however, uses broader categories and philosophical frameworks to summarize the Bible's teaching on themes deemed important.
10. First, apply sound interpretive principles to understand the historical and literary context. Second, identify major theological themes within the text. Third, determine how the text fits into the broader canonical story of God's redemptive acts, and how it is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ.



## Essay Questions

**Instructions:** Please answer each of these essay questions in a well-reasoned and organized essay format.

1. Discuss the significance of viewing the Bible as both a divine and human document in the context of theological interpretation. How does this dual nature influence the interpretive process and what are the implications for the overall understanding of scripture?
2. Explain the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament from a theological perspective, emphasizing the concepts of promise and fulfillment. How does this relationship inform the theological interpretation of specific passages?
3. In what ways does a "Christologically focused" approach to biblical interpretation shape one's understanding of both the Old and New Testaments? Provide specific examples of how theological interpretation finds fulfillment in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
4. Compare and contrast the perspectives of theological interpretation with modern, literary, and postmodern approaches to the Bible, addressing how a theological approach tempers and enhances these other frameworks.
5. What role do key biblical themes and terms such as creation, covenant, redemption, and kingdom play in a theological analysis of scripture? Explain how understanding these themes contributes to a cohesive and unified understanding of the Bible's message.

## Glossary of Key Terms

**Canonical Context:** The understanding of a biblical text within the framework of the entire Bible (Old and New Testaments), recognizing the interconnectedness and overall story of scripture.

**Christologically Focused:** An approach to biblical interpretation that emphasizes the person and work of Jesus Christ as the central lens through which all of scripture is understood, recognizing Him as the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan.

**Coherence of Scripture:** The principle that the various books of the Bible, while diverse in authorship and style, ultimately form a unified and harmonious message of God's redemptive plan, and are not contradictory.

**Inspiration:** The theological belief that God guided the human authors of the Bible, so that the words they wrote were also the words of God.

**Literary Context:** The surrounding text within a biblical passage, including the immediate sentences, paragraphs, or the book as a whole, which helps clarify its meaning.

**Promise and Fulfillment:** The theological relationship between the Old and New Testaments where the Old Testament promises of redemption and salvation are fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

**Redemptive Activity:** The idea of God acting throughout history to rescue and restore humanity and creation from the effects of sin, with the ultimate goal of reconciliation.

**Systematic Theology:** A method of theology that uses philosophical and other categories to categorize and summarize the major teachings of the Bible on any one theme, often based on philosophical categories.

**Theological Analysis:** An approach to biblical interpretation that acknowledges the Bible's nature as the inspired Word of God, focusing on its religious and theological dimensions, and placing its understanding within the overarching story of God's redemptive work.

**Theological Interpretation/Hermeneutics:** A method of interpreting scripture that focuses on the nature of the bible as the word of God; it assumes a divine author and seeks to understand the meaning of the text in light of God's intentions.

## 5. FAQs on Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Session 26, Theological Approaches to Interpretation, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ: Understanding Theological Interpretation of the Bible

- **What is theological interpretation of the Bible, and why is it important?**
- Theological interpretation is a method of reading the Bible that recognizes it as more than just a historical document. It acknowledges that the Bible is divinely inspired and therefore must be understood within a theological context, recognizing it as God's word to humanity. It emphasizes the religious nature of the text and its role in God's redemptive plan, moving beyond solely historical or literary analyses. This method is crucial for Christians because it integrates their belief that the scriptures are God's revelation, leading to a more complete and faithful understanding of the text.
- **How does the concept of canonical scripture influence theological interpretation?**
- Theological interpretation views the entire Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, as a unified whole. This "canonical context" means that each individual book is not interpreted in isolation but in light of its relationship to the rest of the scriptures. The ultimate context for understanding any given text is thus the entire canon. This approach assumes the unity and coherence of the Bible, seeing each part contributing to the overarching narrative of God's redemptive work. It recognizes the relationship between the Old Testament and the New, understanding the Old Testament as the promise and the New Testament as the fulfillment, primarily in Jesus Christ.
- **How does a theological analysis approach the diversity and unity within the Bible?**
- While acknowledging the diversity of authors, literary types, and historical contexts within the Bible, a theological analysis insists on the essential unity and coherence of the scriptures. It recognizes that the different voices and perspectives within the Bible do not contradict each other but rather contribute to a unified picture of God's redemptive plan. Despite the diverse historical and cultural situations addressed, all biblical texts ultimately align within the broader theological unity of the Old and New Testament. This method aims to

demonstrate the essential harmony of the biblical message, even in its diversity, through a lens of theological coherence.

- **What is the relationship between the Old and New Testaments in theological interpretation?**
- The Old and New Testaments are seen as standing in a relationship of promise and fulfillment. The Old Testament contains prophecies and types that are ultimately fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Therefore, while the Old Testament must be understood in its original historical context, its ultimate significance is revealed in light of the New Testament. This relationship is fundamental for understanding Christian theology. The Old Testament's narrative of creation, covenant, and God's relationship with Israel finds its culmination and ultimate meaning in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and the establishment of a new covenant.
- **What does it mean to say that theological interpretation is "Christologically focused"?**
- A central tenet of theological interpretation is that the Bible's overarching story culminates in Jesus Christ. All biblical texts are ultimately understood in light of how they relate to Jesus, his life, teachings, death, and resurrection. Jesus is seen as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and the climax of God's redemptive plan for humanity and creation. This means that when reading any text, the interpreter is to discern how it contributes to and finds its fulfillment in Christ's mission and person. He is seen as the ultimate revelation of God and the key to understanding the entire Bible.
- **How does theological interpretation balance historical context with theological meaning?**
- While understanding the historical, cultural, and literary contexts of biblical texts is crucial, theological interpretation goes beyond that, affirming the supernatural aspect of the scripture by recognizing God's acts in history. It acknowledges that the Bible testifies to God's interventions and actions on behalf of his people. This approach tempers a solely historical approach that might deny any supernatural involvement. It also tempers literary or post-modern approaches which might disregard the historicity and authorial intention of the biblical text. It uses historical understanding as a foundation but also takes account of God's agency within those historical events.

- **What are some of the key themes and terms that emerge from the Bible itself?**
- Theological analysis prioritizes the Bible's own terms and themes, such as creation, covenant, promise, blessing, judgment, redemption, kingdom, faith, priesthood, and reconciliation. Rather than starting with systematic theological categories, this method starts with the main ideas the Bible itself emphasizes, exploring how these terms and themes develop across the Old and New Testaments. These terms, arising from interpretation of the text, help understand the Bible's larger redemptive story. This approach seeks to build an understanding from the text itself, rather than imposing external categories.
- **What are the steps in conducting a theological analysis of a biblical text?**
- The process begins with a sound interpretation of the text within its historical, literary, and cultural context. After this the main theological themes and terms present in the text are identified. Then one explores how those themes contribute to the overall message of the text and how it fits within the grand narrative of God's redemptive activity. Ultimately, there is an effort made to see how this contributes to and is fulfilled in Jesus Christ and his redemptive work. This method moves from specific textual study to understanding the text's broader canonical significance, and how it contributes to the story of God's redemptive plan.