



Open Christian
University

In Association
With



Grace Christian Ministries Bible College

Open Christian University®

M 3 Biblical Theology

A synopsis of biblical themes and teaching

The study deals with core Old and New Testament concepts, where God is the center and the initiator of spiritual blessings, which He brings to the world in Jesus Christ. The investigation deals with theological concepts found within the Old and New Testaments. Specific points of interest are the unifying themes relating to the Messiah, the kingdom of God, the end times, and salvation.

It shall be assumed that the student is acquainted with the general content of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The task here is to inquire of the meaning of this factual knowledge.

The course syllabus is broken into three modules: (1) Theological Inquiry, (2) The Divine Encounter, and (3) Salvation, the Church, and Last Things.

Objectives

- Define the processes of biblical theology
- Investigate topics such as the nature of God, humanity, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, the kingdom of God, the church, and end times

- Develop intellectual understanding of the Christian faith and deepen spiritual awareness

Credit. Credit for the course requires a score of 70% or greater on the overall exams.

Resources

Internet articles are linked within the syllabus. Additionally, a textbook has been adopted for the course.

Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. 3rd. ed. Baker Book House, 2013. 1200 pages. \$36.83.

ISBN: 978-0801036439

Student Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course, the student will be able to

1. Use theological tools
2. Discuss major theological themes
3. Demonstrate awareness of the Christian faith

Expectations

Following is what you may expect in terms of academic engagement and preparation.

Academic Engagement

Engagement with online Internet articles (over 50 articles) (18 hours)

Individualized interaction with student advisor and other academic personnel (3 hours)

Examinations (3 hours)

Using the course syllabus as a guide to reading and study (18 hours)

Note taking (3 hours)

Sub-total—45 hours

Preparation

Activities/exercises (149) (12 hours)

Studying for module exams (6 hours)

Reading the textbook (1,200 pages) (48 hours)

Research Paper (16 hours)

Activity Summary (8 hours)

Sub-total—90 hours

Grand total—135 hours

A Letter from Your Professor

Dear Student,

May I welcome you to the exciting world of theology.

In your previous studies of Critical Introduction to the Old Testament and Critical Introduction to the New Testament, you became acquainted with details of biblical scripture. That introduction continues, but in a slightly different way. Heretofore, you looked at content. In this course, we look for meaning.

“Theology” is a term that draws many reactions. To some, it is much talk about nothing. To others, it is everything. As a matter of fact, we all have a theology. It may not be biblical theology, but everyone has a conception about God. That is right. Theology *is* about God. It is a summation of God’s person and his acts. In our quest, we speak of “biblical” theology, for our primary interest is in framing a worldview within the context of the Old and New Testaments.

Since theology is a term crafted by humans, it is also an art (or science) practiced by humans. Theology is how humans think about God. Therefore, there is no final word in theology—as far as man is concerned. This leads us to the conclusion that there exist *good* theology and *bad* theology are both possible. Of course, we are interested in *good* theology, but as long as the term is identified with human study, we will never come to a perfect theology. Man is incapable of full comprehension. God is who he is, and no one can change that. He does what he does, and no one can challenge him. What we are saying is that given the best of our efforts, we will never come to a full understanding of God and his deeds. We have, of course, biblical revelation, which we do not intend to question. *Human* interpretation and perception remain in flux.

We say the above in order to level the playing field. We are all in this together. Together, we seek understanding and wisdom. We are open to learning. Therefore, we approach our study with quietness, reverence, and prayer. Here we are, Lord. Teach us!

Clear your mind. Determine to study hard. We are about to begin a journey of faith. We want to find out what the Old and New Testaments have to say about who God is, what God has done in the universe, and what he promises he will do in the future. Our quest will take us into a range of topics that relate to God’s purpose and activity.

The OCU staff is ready to assist. Contact your advisor about any questions or problems you may have. As you need me, your advisor can provide my e-mail.

Prof. Dr. Sixbert Sangwa, PhD.

Procedure

1. Preview the entire syllabus to gain an overview of what you will be studying.
2. Secure the textbooks.
3. Read the letter from your professor and take note of the Things to Know on the Course Menu.
4. Beginning with Module 1, read through the syllabus carefully.
5. Read the syllabus material again. This time, begin building a notebook in which you write out pertinent points learned from the Activities. Not only will some exam problems be drawn from the Activities, but at the end of the course you will be instructed to develop a summary of select activities.
6. During the course, you are invited to make five (5) postings of original thoughts or responses on the Student Discussion Forum.
7. When you feel you are prepared for an exam, you may open it from the Course Menu
8. Drawing from your notebook, write a summary of the Activities you performed. This summary is valued at 50 percent of the course grade.
9. Develop a 2000-word paper. The grade shall be valued at 20 percent of the course grade, so take the assignment seriously.
10. Please complete the Course Evaluation, which can be accessed on the Course Menu page, below the Course Summary.

Things to Know

Module 1 Theological Inquiry

1. The nature of systematic theology
2. The source and method of biblical theology
3. Basic assumptions that underlie theological study of the Bible
4. The nature of the relationship between the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures
5. What is "theological" about given biblical passages

Module 2 The Divine Encounter

1. What it means to “know” God
2. The significance of God’s dealings with Abraham, Moses, and David and the role of Israel in God’s redemptive history
3. The extent of God's involvement with the human family
4. The purpose of human life
5. The nature and result of sin
6. The significance of Jesus Christ in terms of his person and work
7. The function of the Holy Spirit
8. The nature of humankind and the spiritual needs of the human race

Module 3 Salvation, the Church, and Last Things

1. The terms of human salvation
2. The identity of the kingdom of God and the church
3. Biblical teaching on "last things": *parousia*, judgment, final states
4. How the study of theology can serve the church

Extended Resources

Beale, G. K. *New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*. Baker Academic, 2011. 1072 pages. \$36.31 ISBN: 978-0801026973

Birch, Bruce, *et al.* *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*. 2nd ed. Abingdon Press, 2005. 504 pages. \$29.47 ISBN: 978-0687066766

Brueggeman, Walter. *Old Testament Theology: An Introduction*. Abingdon Press, 2009. 450 pages. \$24.30 ASIN: B00558JVRK

_____. *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute*. Fortress Press, 2012. 804 pages. \$35 ASIN: B00APJRWUC

Cottrell, Jack. *The Faith Once for All: Bible Doctrine for Today*. College Press Publishing Co. 2002.

608 pages. \$33.13 ISBN: 978-0899009056

Goldingay, John. *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Faith*. IVP Academic, 2016. 891 pages. \$28.11
ISBN: 978-0830824953

_____. *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Gospel*. IVP Academic, 2015. 940 pages. \$34.57
ISBN: 978-083082494

_____. *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Life*. IVP Academic, 2016. 912 pages. \$28.05
ISBN: 978-0830824960

Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Theology*. IVP Academic, 1981. 1064 pages. \$35.77
ISBN: 978-877849650

House, Paul R. *Old Testament Theology*. IVP Academic, 1998. 655 pages. \$45 ISBN: 978-0830815234

Ladd, George and Donald Alfred Hagner. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Rev. ed. William B.
Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993. 778 pages. \$28.22 ISBN: 978-0802806802

Marshall, I. Howard. *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel*. IVP Academic, 2004.
765 pages \$23.68 ISBN: 978-0830825387

_____. *A Concise New Testament Theology*. IVP Academic, 2008. 304 pages. \$17.24
ISBN: 978-0830828784

Morris, Leon. *New Testament Theology*. Zondervan Publishing House, 1990. 368 pages. \$16.76
ISBN: 978-0310455714

Sailhamer, John H. *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach*, Zondervan
Publishing House, 1995. 332 pages. \$20.71 ISBN: 978-0310232025

Thielman, Frank. *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach*. 2nd ed.
Zondervan Publishing House, 2005. 800 pages. \$30.65 ISBN: 978-0310211327

M 3 Biblical Theology

Who among us has not inquired about a higher power? Who has not wondered about what lies beyond our reach and ultimate comprehension? Who does not contemplate the possibility that God has revealed himself in human contexts? Who has not called upon God in a time of crisis? These questions touch on theological inquiry, for "theology" is that common human pursuit to know, understand, and appreciate God.

Theology is a human science. It represents man's conscientious effort to understand God and his revelation. As a science, theology is neutral. It is neither good nor bad. There may be good theologies and bad theologies. And there may be good and bad theologians. But theology itself has no right or wrong meaning. It merely stands for an absolutely necessary process by which one perceives God and his interaction with the world. Theology helps set forth, define, and clarify textual, as well as historical, positions on biblical topics.

When the word theology is used to describe human doctrines that subvert the true gospel of Jesus Christ, it loses its meaning. It becomes useless in informing man's quest to know God. A profitable inquiry is one that will help us spiritually.

In this course, theology is less concerned with speculation about God than about what can be concluded safely from biblical sources. Excluded from review shall be philosophical efforts to prove the existence of God. God's existence is assumed, as is his revelation in Scripture--that is, the Old and New Testaments.

Since the New Testament is dependent upon the Old Testament, New Testament theology hardly stands alone. Much of its substance interlocks with the more ancient texts of Scripture. Even the witness of post-apostolic writers should be taken into account when studying the New Testament. Early post-apostolic figures stood close to the apostles in time and reflected early understandings of the writers of the New Testament. At the same time, extra biblical material should not govern biblical interpretation. Neither does human methodology offer a fail-safe mechanism for theological study.

Labeling this course "Systematic Theology" would suggest an examination of vital topics identified in the

biblical text in an organized manner. Naming the course “Biblical Theology” means the approach to *biblical* topics will be attentive to the development of ideas through time, but it will concentrate on holistic analysis. This will be done as objectively as possible. *Our* challenge in this study shall be to provide correct data, rationale, assumptions, and a framework that will enable you to draw valid conclusions about vital ideas found within the biblical scriptures.

Your challenge is to approach the study with an open mind. Block from your mind preconceived ideas you have about any given passage or biblical topic. Enjoy looking at the Bible afresh. Certainly, what you know about biblical characters and events will serve you well. But for the meaning of these things, sense the excitement that comes from exploring new territory.

It is important to remain tentative in your conclusions until you have a solid comprehension of the entire Bible. But you can certainly build toward those conclusions from the beginning. Let us illustrate the point. As you commence reading Genesis, you may conclude that creation is a central theme for the entire Bible. But as you read further, the creation theme may be overshadowed by some other theme yet to appear. Hence, you may have to adjust your thinking about a creation theme. In other words, creation may be a plank in the platform but not be the most significant plank in the Bible's story. This is not to diminish the importance of creation. But it will leave open the question of whether the Bible is principally a book about *creation* or a book about *redemption*.

Use of resources. The primary source is the Bible. A strong secondary source is the textbook by Erickson. Erickson provides the substance as you engage in his thorough and coherent discussion of biblical themes.

Collateral sources, not always accurate but representative of many minds, appear in the form of Internet articles. These should be consulted as they appear in the syllabus. These articles will provoke your thought as you plow your way through. Once you have read the articles cited in the syllabus, you may wish to explore the Internet for additional insight in various theological subjects: God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, church, kingdom of God, eschatology, redemption, etc. Remember, the Internet is open to all, and all kinds of ideas appear there. So, be selective with what you read and concentrate on those articles that appear to have substance without prejudicial bias. The strength of this path is that it exposes you to a wide range of opinions on biblical topics and tests your ability to do critical theological thinking.

On a final note, you are endeavoring to establish authority for the theological concepts you encounter. The modern debate between conservatives and liberals is over whether the doctrines of Christianity are so inseparably tied to that ancient worldview that they cannot be maintained independently of it. Your personal disposition toward the material will have a large affect upon your own conclusions on this matter.

The course is divided into three modules. The first module treats the general question of theological inquiry. The second analyzes what God has done to enable human salvation from sin. The third looks at special topics in biblical theology.

MODULE **1** Theological Inquiry

Theological inquiry pursues questions of ultimate concern. Central to biblical theology is the idea that God not only created the universe but that he has also interacted with mankind. God's creative act was good, yet mankind chose to seek fullness apart from God. Nevertheless, God extended grace and ultimately provided redemption to all through Jesus Christ.

For the biblicist, God's interaction has left us with a credible record of his person and will. That record, assumed to be the 66 books of the Protestant Bible, is the authentic written source for theological study. The total canon of biblical scripture consists of two parts, commonly referred to as the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament was composed primarily in the Hebrew language, with small portions in the broader Aramaic tongue. The New Testament was written in Greek. The two testaments are distinctive, the first coming from Israelite hands and the second from Christian hands. The first testament focuses on the covenant God established with the descendants of Abraham through his grandson, Jacob. This covenant governed God's special relationship with Israel during a time of preparation for a "new" covenant God established with the Jews and all people drawn to him through faith in Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah. The Old Testament flows into the New, which is the climax of the Old. Theologians have spoken of this relationship as promise (Old Testament) and fulfillment (New Testament).

The Old Testament was complete four centuries before Christ and generally recognized by the Jews to be so before the end of the 1st century C.E. The gospel preached by the apostles of Christ was based on the Hebrew Scriptures. Sources that reported the person, activity, and teachings of Jesus were initially preserved in oral form before taking shape in written documents. To these "Gospels" were added an account of the spread of the gospel and apostolic writings that guided the early church. These documents circulated freely among the Christians.

The first person to attempt to define a New Testament "canon" precisely was the heretic Marcion. Then, about 200, a list of generally recognized books was published in what is now called the Muratorian Fragment. It testified to four Gospels, Acts, thirteen epistles of Paul, two letters of John, Jude, Revelation, the Revelation of Peter, and the Wisdom of Solomon. By the 4th century, the New Testament canon as we have it today was universally attested. A study of the canon is not so much an investigation of how the books came to be accepted as scripture. Rather, it is a review of how the scriptures that gained acceptance came to be recognized. This is a subtle yet an important distinction: the church did not determine what books were inspired; the church recognized what books God had inspired.

Before attempting to discover the theological intent of the Bible, we need to gain some understanding of the task. We shall define theology and then look at the nature of the source material from which to draw our conclusions. Module 1 offers an orientation to our theological pursuit. The module has been divided into three units: (1) Studying and Knowing God, (2) The Source of Old Testament Theology, and (3) The Source of New Testament Theology.

This syllabus offers guidance in understanding what the Bible discloses about themes relating to God's person, acts, and will for humanity. You are the lead explorer in this adventure. Your mission is to discover what the biblical text says about God and his activity. You are the trailblazer hunting for treasure.

Unit 1. Studying and Knowing God

How can God be described in terms that the human can understand? How can a spiritual being be comprehended by a being who is confined to a physical realm? With what may one compare God?

Studying and knowing God are daunting tasks. One might say it is an impossible task. This is true in the ultimate degree. But if the task were impossible altogether, then any effort to understand and know God becomes futile. Be assured, biblical scripture affirms that it is possible to comprehend God sufficiently to enter into a spiritual relationship with him.

God is the chief actor in both testaments. Humans are expected to behave in a manner that honors their maker. When they act without regard for God, he eventually frustrates their plans and summons them to judgment. He allows a measure of oppression to envelope even the righteous, but he never forgets the oppressed. His care for those he has made is everywhere observed. Both the present and the future become points in time when God promises marvelous things for the blessing of human creatures.

Our task is not to present a fully systematic analysis of biblical thought, but to set the table. To use an analogy, when one finishes a fine dinner, one may recall some tastes, but in the final analysis will have an overarching sense of having enjoyed a wonderfully blended meal. A goal of this course is to produce for you that satisfying taste of a fine spiritual feast. Before that can become a reality, we must present the food selections one by one. The individual books of the Hebrew Scriptures represent an appetizer. The New Testament is the main course and dessert rolled into one.

As one approaches theology, one should realize that God cannot be described fully in human terms. To place a literal meaning on all biblical passages which describe God in human terms would be short-sighted and would miss the point of the figure being used. Much of the language about God is accommodating to the human understanding. In his relationship with the universe, God is best described as both immanent and transcendent. He is at once present, and yet he exists beyond the physical.

The unit contains three sections: (a) the meaning and scope of theological inquiry, (b) the sources and method of biblical theology, and (c) assumptions and principles governing theological inquiry. The investigation offers a rationale and foundation for the course.

a. The meaning and scope of theological inquiry

Definition. "Theology" is a combination of two Greek words, *theos* (God) and *logos* (word). The literal meaning of the term is "a word about God." The intent of the word is to signify "the study of God." Hence, theology signifies a serious study of God and the ways he has dealt with his universe. Properly speaking, "doctrine" refers to the whole scope of Christian teaching, while "theology" is a branch of Christian doctrine, which embraces both theology and ethics. The goal of "theology" is to know God in a relational way.

Scope. As a modern discipline, theology incorporates other themes, but they are all associated with God and God's activity. The unseen world, the idea of sin, human suffering, divine revelation, God's redemptive processes, worship, the church, rituals, and the end times are all subsumed under the idea of theology. Yet, as one faces theological study, one is met with a variety of qualifying terms.

Among the terms one meets are "biblical" theology, "canonical" theology, "systematic" theology, and "historical" theology. Biblical theology identifies the corpus under review and is sometimes associated with canonical theology. A *canonical* approach suggests that a theological interpretation of the Bible should take seriously the order of the biblical collection and the time of composition. It is concerned with the setting and with the development of ideas. *Systematic* theology, on the other hand, is less concerned with context and development; its main interest is in pulling together the ideas found in the Bible into a

coherent whole. Even with the different emphases, biblical and systematic theology are often thought to be identical in intent.

In more universal usage, systematic theology incorporates the historical development of doctrines. In this application, biblical theology is concerned with interpreting biblical topics without tracing the interpretation of these themes throughout history.

This course is not a systematic theology by the comprehensive definition. Despite the title of the course, we shall be concerned with both canonical and systematic analysis, but with little attention given to the results of "historical" theology that discusses voices and interpretations that have come down through the centuries since the completion of the biblical canon. For studies in historical theology see books like Justo Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, and Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*.

Post-apostolic theologians have undertaken theological inquiry from other perspectives. For example, Augustine, believing theology can be elucidated by philosophy, interjected philosophy into theological study. Philosophy, which plays a legitimate role in human contemplation, cannot be used as an unqualified tool in theological inquiry, nor as a means for judging the biblical worldview. Modern approaches, like Liberation Theology, take as a starting point some particular organizing principle, such as poverty, oppression, and lifestyle.

Textbook Reading

Erickson defines theology and compares theology and philosophy. In the first of these chapters, the author asks, What is theology? He addresses the nature of religion, defines theology, presents the need of theology, establishes a starting point, and considers theology as a science. Erickson also addresses the relationship between theology and philosophy. In doing so, he treats various philosophical systems. Read Erickson, chaps. 1-2.

Internet Source

["New Testament Theology"](#) by G. R. Osborne, Believe Religious Information Source

Activity

Analyze the following passages. Write down on paper the theological import of each of the passages:
Deut. 1:1-2:25

Psalm 19

Obadiah

Mark 1:1-13

1 Cor. 1:20-31

Philemon

b. The sources and method of biblical theology. The Bible is a book intended for understanding. The reader should not be intimidated by its size or content. Its vocabulary is quite simple. Its literary structure reflects conventional Hebrew and Greek style. Different forms of writing (genre) found within the sacred text help convey its message. Whether stories, poems, laments, judgment speeches, proverbs, songs, genealogies, laws, gospels, epistles, or apocalypse, the various writing forms play a significant role in communicating the intent of each biblical book. While the Bible shares many points with its broader world, it is in many particulars unique in its theology.

Reading for theological meaning does not set aside factual material. Rather, it interprets factual statements. But then, the Bible consists of more than historical narrative. We are dealing with a literary composition written primarily as a theological statement about God and his interrelation with mankind.

We need to be aware that the study of theology has a context. For convenience sake, let us set forward two general contexts—one for the Old Testament and a second for the New Testament.

Old Testament context. The Old Testament context is provided by the many nations that surrounded the principals noted in biblical scripture as being faithful to God. It has been suggested, for example, that the Babylonian accounts of creation and the flood were taken over by the author of Genesis. While there are some similarities belonging to the Babylonian and biblical accounts, the differences are far greater. The creation and flood accounts accent the contrasts between biblical theology and myth. More specifically, Israel's immediate neighbors infected Israel's faith with pagan concepts, but this was against their calling as a holy nation and a people of God's possession. Significantly, the biblical emphasis is on the distinctiveness of cosmology as well as theology.

Despite the contrasts between biblical and non-biblical theologies, the question of influence is serious. We will not debate the issue in this course. Rather, we shall be content to know that biblical theology often ran counter to the actual faith of the Israelite people.

Modern scholars have had difficulty fitting the simple story of creation (Genesis 1-2) into a framework of science. Not a few have discounted the Bible's assertion and have opted instead for a view that the vast cosmos came into existence quite by chance and accident. Others have adopted a view that God

employed a process of evolution to allow man to develop from a lower species of life and became the complex character he now is. Still others consider creation an illusion of the mind.

In the final analysis, the concept of creation is essential to biblical theology. Not only is the act of creation affirmed; the nature of humankind and God's intentions toward man assume the implications of the creation account. As an illustration of implications, the wording "it is you who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them" is contained three times in the Old Testament (Exod. 20:8-11; Neh. 9; Psalm 146) and affirmed of Jesus in Acts 4:24. Furthermore, the New Testament asserts that Jesus Christ was involved with creation. Denial of the concept of creation undermines the entire scheme of the biblical story. Denial essentially removes the rationale for human redemption and leaves any notion of redemption with man alone.

New Testament context. The New Testament also has a social and religious context. For example, during the 1st century, people were moving toward personal religion; some expressed interest in mystery religions. While it is tempting to compare the emergence of Christianity with mystery religions, we should realize that the core worldviews are different. Where parallels exist between the mystery texts and the New Testament, one cannot assume that the vocabulary will have the same meaning. Yet, mystery religion texts and the New Testament have many parallels, including teachings on resurrection.

Common traits of the mystery religions included an annual vegetation cycle, an immediate goal of a mystery experience, and a myth in which the deity returned to life or triumphed over his enemies. Before 100 C.E., the mystery religions were still largely confined to specific locations and were a relatively novel phenomenon. The cult of Isis seems to have enjoyed success in the Roman Empire due to its impressive ritual and the hope of immortality offered to its followers. The goddess Cybele was known as the Great Mother. She began as a goddess of nature and came to be viewed as the mother of all gods and the mistress of all life.

By contrast, Christian practices such as baptism and the Lord's Supper show no affinity with rituals found in ancient Greek and Roman religion. No striking parallels exist between the birth and death of gods and the death of Jesus. Pre-Christian mysteries did not regard their initiation rites as a kind of rebirth. One important matter to keep in mind when studying parallels between ancient religions and the New Testament is that the essential worldview is different.

Some moderns think that 1st century Christianity and the New Testament were heavily influenced by pagan philosophical systems. While one may find similarities between Plato and the New Testament, this does not prove that Plato influenced the writers of the New Testament. Truth is truth, wherever it may be

found. The Bible may be novel and some of its ideas may be unique, but that does not mean that it is totally unique in everything it presents. Stoicism was the most important philosophical influence on cultured people during the 1st century. But Stoic philosophers were materialistic, pantheistic, and fatalists. On the other hand, its moral values may have strong parallels with those of the Bible, although the rationale for moral values was set upon a different foundation.

The most outstanding Alexandrian Jewish intellectual was Philo, who spoke of *logos*. But there is no need to postulate a conscious relationship between Philo and the New Testament use of the *logos*. The repeated stress in Hebrews on Jesus' compassionate concern for his brethren is compatible with Philo's view of the emotions. So, parallels exist, but dependency is not a reality.

Method. Theological method includes three processes: (1) collection of data, (2) analysis, and (3) synthesis. The initial activity is to pull together pertinent information on crucial subjects. The second is to study the material thoroughly to draw conclusions as to what the complement of data means. The final stage calls for integration and application in the modern world.

At the base level, one begins the theological journey through the intellectual process. This process makes use of the human mind. Yet, we know that if one draws from innate perceptions, one's conclusions will look more like those belonging to "natural" theology than to "biblical" theology. So, when one pursues biblical theology, one is committed to look closely at what the Bible discloses about God and the world.

Objectivity is the goal of every inquirer, but it is a quality that is more easily desired than accomplished. Two basic reasons make the task of doing theology difficult. One, humans are influenced by the world order and, therefore, see the Bible differently. Two, over time, theological inquiry changes as the intellectual environment pushes theologians in the direction of the latest trends.

The struggle to know what is cultural or what is a matter of personal judgment presents every generation with a challenge. Christians individually struggle to know how to apply principles from Scripture to real life situations. Scripture was never intended to be read as a rulebook, but as openness to the mind of God. Its wisdom has a divine source. It is timeless. Though every situation may not be addressed, the principles of good and evil are sufficiently clear to map a proper course for most questions.

Modern scholars have developed their own methods for analyzing biblical scripture. Their methods include Form Criticism, Literary Source Criticism, Redaction Criticism, Historical Criticism, Comparative Religions Criticism, Structural Criticism, and Reader Response Criticism. These methods analyze the established text with goals other than exegesis or theological inquiry. Another form, Textual Criticism, is of

a different variety. Textual Criticism is concerned with establishing the biblical text from extant manuscripts. The work of critical analysis deserves a hearing. However, an examination of these critical methods must be reserved for treatment elsewhere. The quest here is for an understanding of what is written in the Bible. We shall be content to study what has been preserved in the published Bible. And we shall focus on the meaning of the text with its original setting more than what it came to mean in post-biblical time periods.

Textbook Reading

Read Erickson, chaps. 3-5. Topics covered are theological method, critical study of the Bible, contemporizing the Christian message, theology and its language, and postmodernism.

Internet Sources

"[Theological Method](#)," Quartz Hill School of Theology

"[Toward a Theological Understanding of Postmodernism](#)" by Daniel J. Adams, Cross Currents

"[Revelation](#)," Britannica Online Encyclopedia

"[Was the New Testament Influenced by Pagan Philosophy?](#)" by Ronald Nash, *Christian Research Journal*, Fall 1993

"[Was the New Testament Influenced by Pagan Religions?](#)" by Ronald Nash, *Christian Research Journal*, Fall 1994

"[The New Testament and Greco-Roman Mystery Religions](#)" by Greg Herrick

"[The Emergence of the New Testament Canon](#)" by Daniel F. Liewen

Activity

The discussion above only hints at the subjects listed below. See if you can develop a one-page essay on each of the following topics. Please give the assignment serious attention.

1. The Possibility of Theology
2. The Method of Theology
3. Contemporizing the Christian Message
4. The Nature of the Relationship between the Hebrew and the Greek Scriptures

c. Assumptions and principles governing theological inquiry. The data upon which one draws for theological reflection lies in three areas: (1) general revelation, which looks to the natural universe for insights, (2) the human conscience, and (3) special or particular revelation—oral and written. In this

course, the quest is limited to written revelation found in the Bible.

Wrestling with the question of good and evil, ancient Greek thinkers projected the concept of a semi-god creator. So too, at the beginning of our exploration of biblical theology, we are faced with questions as to the person and nature of God. Is there a God—such a one as described in the Bible? Did God create the world in a fashion described in Genesis? Is man's human condition somehow traceable to a single pair of people? Does God actually communicate his will to human beings, and is that revelation contained in the Bible?

Theology is necessary as a safeguard against error, heresy, schism, and cult-building. The swirling sea of human ideas punctuates the seriousness of one's assumptions when dealing with theology. Contrasting positions arise out of different concerns. The affirmation that the biblical account is correct in every detail arises out of a desire to protect the Bible's declarations and to preserve the implications of creation in the drama of human salvation. The affirmation that the biblical account is myth—perhaps original, perhaps borrowed—arises out of a bias toward the modern scientific method.

Assumptions. Since discovering the meaning of major biblical topics and themes calls for human reflection, one's approach to the biblical text is critical. Basic assumptions one makes about the biblical text will condition the conclusions one draws. What appears to be a simple "it means what it says" can turn out to be, "it means what I *want* it to say." For example, the outcome can be dramatically different for one who approaches the biblical text as myth from one who approaches the text as an historical document. The image one gets of the New Testament witness will be different if one denies its account of miracles. The outcome will be drastically skewed if the interpreter denies the crucifixion and resurrection. A rationalistic approach will yield a different outcome from an existential approach. Even among a community of believers, one may be inclined to study the Bible in its historical context, while another sees everything as having a direct application to self with total disregard for the historical context. If one starts with improper assumptions about the Bible as a whole or a specific text, even the most obvious meaning may be missed. Following are assumptions that underlie our investigation.

1. *There is a God, and he has revealed himself and his intentions for mankind through the biblical Scriptures.*

2. *God's ultimate revelation was in Jesus Christ, to which the written scriptures bear witness.* The most complete mode of revelation is the incarnation of Jesus (John 1:1, 14), which found full expression in his birth, life, teaching, atonement, resurrection, ascension and coronation.

3. *The biblical record is worthy of trust.* Needless to say, one's general view of the Bible's trustworthiness will determine whether one approaches the Scriptures for enlightenment or for some other reason. From our vantage, Scripture is taken to be accurate. Those who penned the written testimony were "inspired," that is, supernatural influence on the writers rendered their writings a true witness.

4. *The books of the biblical canon form a coherent whole.* This means that various biblical texts agree with each other. They present ideas that are consistent with the general design of the Bible.

5. *The message of the Bible is "theological" and exists for the purpose of drawing people to faith.* Old Testament theology provides the basis for understanding the New Testament, for the New Testament is a continuation of Old Testament thought. God appears in the Old Testament as the creator of the universe, who takes an active hand in the affairs of the growing population. He holds people everywhere responsible for their actions. He moves against communities that dishonor him. God also enters the human experience in order to provide blessings and spiritual redemption.

6. *Men also come to know God through the "cult," that is through rituals of worship.* For Israel, these rituals included prayer, sacrifice, song, feasts, and structures such as the tabernacle, temple, and priests. While man cannot experience God completely (see Exod. 33:12-23), God is not so distant that he cannot have a relationship with mankind. Under the New Covenant, Christians engage in prayer, singing, and the Lord's supper.

7. *Although attributed to several human writers, both the human agents and their compositions assume an authoritative posture.* Recorded events attest to divine activity that has eternal implications for those who respond to the message. Biblical scripture is the final authority in spiritual matters.

Principles

1. *The Bible contains a wide variety of literary genre, which should be interpreted in keeping with standards of its original languages.*

2. *The Bible should be interpreted in keeping with its overall themes. How one discovers underlying themes is a matter of methodology.* Does one discover the central themes of the whole Bible and then try to discern how individual books and particular passages support them? Or, does one look for themes within smaller selections of text and then try to tie these together in order to establish the intent of the Scriptures? Does it not make sense that working from both angles is in order?

3. *The Hebrew Scriptures are incomplete in themselves, as they only anticipate the "fulfillment" of God's spiritual promise to the nations.* It remained for the New Testament to describe how God's purpose was fulfilled and consummated in Jesus Christ. Consequently, the correct understanding of a New Testament passage must be consistent with the message of the whole Bible, as well as with other New Testament passages. For example, the message of the Gospels is consistent with that of the Epistles.

4. *Each biblical passage is important for comprehending a pericope.* Each pericope (block of material that belongs together) is important for understanding the Scriptures as a whole. However, no passage or pericope was intended to be read in isolation from the whole composition. Each must be interpreted in light of the overall design and purpose of the Bible. The composite of all the stories, wisdom, and legal enactments holds meaning that governs the particulars. The Bible is indeed a "book of books." But, the combined books contribute to a single, unified whole.

5. *Interpretation must be governed by the biblical text itself.* Supplementary studies are often needed to provide background and clarification for the reader of the biblical text. Local customs, word studies, comparative studies, archaeological discoveries, theological discussions, and commentaries can shed light on a biblical passage. But background studies and human commentary do not govern the meaning of the Bible; they only bring enlightenment.

Textbook Reading

Topics in Erickson include universal and particular revelation, inspiration, inerrancy, and authority. Read Erickson, chaps. 6-10.

Internet Sources

A good introduction to various views on the Gospels will expose you to a wide range of perspectives. Within the Internet articles, there are numerous hyperlinks. Some of these have been included in this section of reading. When an author is careful to make an objective case, he may not favor one position over the other. Rather, he leaves the reader to draw his/her own conclusions. You will be exposed to a number of ideas. The various positions are included so you will know what is being said and by whom. Part of university-level work is to be able to look beyond the printed words and detect the underlying philosophy of the position.

["The Christian Scriptures \(New Testament\): Overview of the Gospels in \(and excluded from\) the Original Canon,"](#)

Religious Tolerance

"The Structure of New Testament Revelation" by C. K. Lehman

Activity

Evaluate the assumptions governing theological inquiry. Locate passages in the Bible that tend to confirm each of the stated assumptions above. The following passages will serve as starters.

Assumption 1. Eph. 3:1-13

Assumption 2. John 1:1-14; Hebrews 1

Assumption 3. 2 Pet. 1:12-21

Assumption 4. Acts 7

Assumption 5. Hebrews 11

Assumption 6. Leviticus 16

Unit 2. The Source of Old Testament Theology

Although theology points to understanding God, the discipline also embraces the human situation and what God has done in the face of that situation. Any consideration of God apart from his specific acts with reference to mankind would be incomplete.

Theological thinking about God would be incomplete without the biblical text. The text is identified as those writings which both Jews and Christians consider sacred. Being sacred means they are revered. They are revered because of what they represent—God's revelation of himself. This makes the Old Testament a "theological" composition.

The Jews thought of the entire canon of scriptures as being composed of three groups of writings, which they called the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. Of the three divisions, the Torah is primary, as it lays the foundation for the rest of the books in the Hebrew Bible. The Torah marks the general direction of the Scriptures--both Old and New Testaments.

By nature, the Hebrew Scriptures are God-centered. They begin by declaring that God created the world. Quickly, they move to the story of mankind. Having presented man in a rather close relationship with God, the story proceeds to show that humans became and remained, generally, rebellious and self-seeking. Had the story ended there, the Bible would be no more than a purely secular account of obscure events. However, the ingenious mark of these "scriptures" is the story told about the interaction between

God and man. They present "God's story" (theology) rather than "man's story" (history).

The Hebrew Scriptures provide unique insights into God's intention for humanity and tell how he dealt with man's "sinful" plight. Judgment by flood in Noah's day was followed by salvation of the race and promise. The scattering of the rebellious in the days of the Tower of Babel led to an accomplishment of God's purposes. The choosing of Abraham (Genesis 12) then became the focus of God's activity. Amid a generally depraved world, God raised a nation to (1) declare the glory of Yahweh to a pagan world and (2) become an avenue for the coming of his own "Son," through whom he would provide redemption and salvation for the world.

When reading the Old Testament, one will notice that a person, event, or situation is introduced, only to be extended later. There may appear to be no connection between an item and the surrounding text. At least, the person or event may appear inconsequential to the larger story being told. Later, however, a connection may be established and a theme develops.

Let us give an example of how the mention of an Old Testament incident may be extended. When the story of Judah and his daughter-in-law, Tamar, appears in Genesis 38, it interrupts the story of Joseph. A union takes place between Judah and Tamar, a son is born, and the name of the son is given--Perez (Gen. 38:29). Perez is further mentioned as having accompanied his father when the family moved to Egypt (Gen. 46:12). Later, Perez is the head of a clan (Num. 26:20-21). References to Judah's family seem incidental to the text. But, in Ruth 4:18-22, Perez becomes the link to King David. The Chronicler, who labors to establish the line of David, lists Perez (1 Chron. 2:4-5). Perez appears a few additional times in the Old Testament, but the most telling reference is in the New Testament, where the genealogy of Jesus is traced from Abraham to David through Perez (Matt. 1:3). The significance of the name rests only with its linkage to persons who held a special place in the story that led to David and then to Jesus.

David was the king whose "house" God promised to establish. The reference is to his kingship, which would continue as an everlasting one (2 Sam. 7:4-16). Whatever the reason for writing the book of Ruth, one cannot overlook the genealogy that comes at the close of the composition. The establishment of David's house emerges as a major event in Yahweh's activity--a watershed mark in God's dealing with mankind. He called Abram to leave Ur and made a covenant with him that would eventually offer hope to every family on earth. He revealed himself to Moses and made a covenant with Israel at Sinai. He established the kingdom of David and projected the reign of his Son, Jesus.

a. The Torah. The Torah means "instruction." The five books included in the Torah are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Discovering the theology of Genesis. The book of Genesis is a book of beginnings. It establishes the foundation for the rest of the Bible—both Old and New Testaments. Nowhere does the Bible set out to “prove” the existence of God. Genesis begins, simply, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1).”

The literary structure often reveals clues to the theological content of a biblical text. Notice, for example, the pattern set in the creation account (Genesis 1-2). First, you may note the close of each day with, "And there was evening, and there was morning--the first day." Note also the pattern in the creation narrative: light, water, land, light, water, land.

Much can be learned about the God of creation from Genesis 1-2. However, creation is not the central point of the composition. Creation is only the beginning of the story. God's relation with humanity is continuous. The initial chapters set the stage for the ultimate redemption of sinful humanity through a covenant with Abraham.

Discovering the theology of Exodus. God's intent appears clearly in connection with his deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery (Exod. 5:22-6:8). Yahweh (the name by which God was known to Israel) is "the one who is," the God who brings salvation. Salvation is defined, for Israel, as *deliverance* and *blessing*. Israel's state of well-being resulted from her reconciliation with God, as experienced in connection with worship and sacrifice, i.e. the cult. Through the exodus, Israel would know that Yahweh is the God who delivered her out of bondage unto himself.

Discovering the theology of Leviticus through Deuteronomy. The remaining books of the Torah focus on laws given to Israel and a forty-year wandering in the desert due to their lack of faith. The material is important for at least three reasons. One, it demonstrates God's nature and the expectation of faith which God holds for a people living in covenant relationship with him. Two, it gives insight to a bit of God's redemptive history. And three, it forms the basis for what we learn in the New Testament, i.e., that law-keeping is inadequate for human salvation.

Covenant and law. Central to the idea of a spiritual relationship between God and man is a covenant that expects loyalty (Exod. 19:3-8). Note the setting: the people of Israel gathered at Mount Sinai following the Exodus. Yahweh reminded Israel of what he had done for them--brought them out of Egypt. He promised that if they would obey him and keep his covenant, they would be his treasured possession. He further added he would make them to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The covenant formula is, "I shall be your God, and you shall be my people. "The rightful response for Israel was loyalty.

In the ancient East, there were two basic types of covenant: suzerain and parity. The *suzerain* covenant was the kind that a strong, aggressive nation would put on a vassal. The stronger nation would overtake the defenseless one. The document drawn to mark the occasion would include (1) a preamble, to identify the persons of the treaty, (2) an historical prologue, to review the relationship of the two parties, (3) basic stipulations, to detail what each party would do for the other, (4) a call to the gods to witness the covenant, (5) notation of blessings that would accrue from the arrangement, and (6) the curses that would attend the weaker party if the covenant were broken. A vassal to a more powerful party accepted conditions compelled by the more powerful party, and thus enjoyed benefits (if any) provided by the more powerful party. First Samuel 11:1 is an example. "The primary purpose of the suzerain treaty was to establish a firm relationship between the suzerain and his vassal, including military support from the suzerain. However, the interests of the suzerain were primary. Its form was unilateral. The stipulations were binding only on the vassal, although a prologue often related the suzerain's benevolent deeds in behalf of the vassal" (Ralph L. Smith, *Old Testament Theology* [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993], 141).

The *parity* covenant is one made between two parties of equal status. Here one would see bargaining and negotiating. Examples include the covenant between Laban and Jacob (Gen. 31:44-50), and that between Isaac and Abimelech (Gen. 26:26-31). While Yahweh's covenant with Israel is certainly not a parity covenant, it is not exactly a suzerain covenant either. However, the language of Exodus 19 is similar to that of the suzerain covenant.

Within Israel itself there is an additional covenant type: the patron covenant, where a superior (God) obligates himself to an inferior apart from any conditions. This covenant is typical of Old Testament covenants where Yahweh obligates himself to Israel. Examples: Noahic (Gen. 9:8-17); Abrahamic (Gen. 12:3; 15:1; 17:1-8); and Davidic (2 Sam 7:5-16). The classic work on covenant in the Old Testament is Walther Eichrodt's *Old Testament Theology*, in which Eichrodt sees the Old Testament constructed around the central theme of covenant.

Ten Commandments (Exodus 20), or Ten Words from the Hebrew perspective, outline the basic moral requirements for Israel. The Ten Words function much like a prologue. They serve as a wonderful introduction to the fuller legal code that follows. Exodus 24:7-8 speaks of the confirmation of the covenant, which was sealed with blood.

Activity

Category One

1. Read carefully Genesis 1 and 2. Identify key words and phrases that appear in the text—words that are repeated (e.g., the word “good”) and phrases that recur (e.g., “And there was evening and there was morning”). Look for anything that seems special (e.g., the “image” of God in 1:27). Distinguish between narrative and poetic structure. Words are vehicles of thought. They are all important to the sentence structure or to the story. Using every effort to remain unbiased, write out what you find to be the essential elements in the first two chapters of Genesis.

What key ideas or concepts did you find? For example, the statement that “God created” presents a concept about God and the universe. The creation of man in God’s image is another concept. Reference to God’s speaking offers still another concept about God.

Now, look at the Genesis text again and identify what appear to be central themes--*i.e.*, recurring topics which flow through the entire composition. For example, God’s perfect creative activity may be a theme that runs through the two chapters. This may or may not be a central theme for the entire Bible, but it may very well be for these two chapters. The text of Genesis 1 moves toward the creation of mankind, followed by the text of Genesis 2, which provides more detail. What is important about the detail? What else emerges as a possible theme?

2. Having looked at key words, concepts, themes, and the literary structure of Genesis 1-2, scan the material from Genesis 3-5. Write down what you discover. What conclusions can you draw relative to the general tenor of the material? How do these chapters link with the opening chapters of Genesis?

3. Look at Genesis 6-11. Write down what you think are the leading elements. What is the human condition? What does God do about it? What does the account say about man? What does it say theologically about God? Was God’s intention in the Flood to destroy man or to redeem man?

4. Over three-fourths of the content of Genesis pertains to one man—Abraham—and his family. Analyze this phenomenon and see if you can discover why the first eleven chapters cover such a tremendous amount of time and why chapters 12-50 concentrate on four generations of a single family. Your ability to do theological study of the Bible starts with your ability to comprehend the theological meaning of the book of Genesis.

Category Two

1. You should already know the basic facts of Exodus. Here you are asking, What role does Exodus play in biblical theology? Your assignment is to identify the key concepts in Exodus and fit them into your

developing understanding of the theological import of the book. Note first how Exodus follows Genesis. What vital connection do you find other than telling how the descendants of Jacob's family escaped Egypt? Why was it important for them to leave Egypt? What connection did their departure have with God's intentions? Why do you think God afflicted the Egyptians as he did?

2. Look carefully at Exod. 5:22-6:8. What is so special about the passage? Would you say Israel discovered God at this instance? Or, rather, would you say God revealed himself to Israel? At this point, God's full intentions are not clear. For now, it is important to see what role Israel would play in God's work on earth. Note that the calling of Israel was not conditioned on their goodness, but on God's purposes. And those purposes would ultimately be shown to be inclusive of all people. God's promise to deliver Israel from Egypt was connected with his promise to Abraham (Genesis 12). It also embraced a covenant relationship. Compare this with Exodus 19.

Observe the promise Yahweh made to Israel: "I will be your God" (Exod. 6:7). What is implied in the statement, "I will be your God?" What did Yahweh promise to do as Israel's God?

Observe also that the covenant promise was conditional: "Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant . . . (Exod. 19:5). What is the implication of the condition?

Why would Exod. 5:22-6:8 be chosen over Genesis 12:1-3 as the first clearly articulated passage about God's purpose?

3. Institutions are often important for reminding us of important things. Look at Exodus 12 and write out what you believe was the benefit to Israel for observing the Passover on an annual basis.

4. Deliverance (salvation) is a work of God. Observe Exodus 15 and write out what you find as to who is credited with accomplishing the Exodus. The passage is unique, for it appears as a song within an ongoing narrative. Perhaps just here, Israel expresses a deeper faith in Yahweh than at any other time. The song has both a past and a forward look as it describes what Yahweh has done and what he will do in the future. The theological content should be evident.

Category Three

1. Review the book of Leviticus. Look for the role that sacrifices played in the covenant God made with Israel. Is it possible for any person to keep the laws perfectly? If so, why were there mandated sacrifices? If not, how could animal sacrifices be the ultimate means for securing forgiveness of sins?

2. Look at the book of Numbers. What function does the book play in the ongoing story of God's redemptive acts?

3. Deuteronomy consists of three speeches by Moses to the generation of Israelites about to cross the Jordan River into the land God swore to give them. Why was it important for Moses to deliver these speeches?

Category Four

Consider the following questions.

1. How does the idea of covenant relate to the community of Israel?

2. How is salvation understood in the Old Testament? Or, What is the basic meaning of "deliverance" in the context of Israel's exodus from Egypt and the covenant made with Israel at Sinai?

b. The Prophets. "The Prophets" comprise those books that relate "God's prophetic history. "In a blend of narrative and poetry, they relate the story of the relationship between God and Israel. Beginning with the initial settlement in Canaan, the prophetic books describe a millennium of encounter. God's plan to bless the world through the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lies behind a more immediate intent to bless Israel. Whether faithful or not, Yahweh would eventually reveal himself more fully in a future Messiah. But the immediate concern of the Prophets was with Israel.

The covenant Yahweh made with the first generation of Israelites needed renewing with successive generations. Once Israel reached the "sworn land," the new generation was instructed to renew the covenant. And then, at the end of Joshua's day, another covenant renewal took place. Read Deuteronomy 29; Josh. 8:30-35; 24.

Provisions for a king in Israel were made in the Torah. Of course, Yahweh is the king, as dramatically portrayed in the Song of Moses (Exodus 15). So, when he prescribed behavior for the future king of Israel, he expected that king to rule in his interest. The king was forbidden to multiply wives, wealth, and horses. These would lead him into idolatry (wives), self-indulgence (wealth), or self-reliance (horses for warfare). He was to have a copy of the Torah and lead the people in worship of Yahweh. See Deut. 17:14-20.

The occasion for Israel's receiving a king was the desire to fight against their enemies with a "king" like the nations around them. Their motives were wrong, yet Yahweh honored their request with a choice of his own. See 1 Samuel 8.

Something special happened between Yahweh and King David. David wanted to build a temple for Yahweh, but Yahweh responded in the negative. A temple would be built by his son Solomon, but not by David. Instead, Yahweh promised David to build him a house, meaning a lasting kingship. Never in the history of Israel (Judah) would there fail to be a king of David's line. When Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C.E., the king was a descendant of David. Jesus, too, is of the lineage of David. He is the rightful king of Israel. See 2 Sam. 7:8-16.

The task of the prophets was mainly to bring Israel and Judah back to covenant loyalty. Yahweh is a patient God, but he does act at such time as he deems necessary to bring his people to a vital realization of his presence. The prophets called and called and called Israel to repent, to return to their God. Then they pronounced their plight in the event they would not respond. They foretold of plagues and enemies. They eventually projected the exile, first of Israel, then of Judah. Beyond the exile, they spoke of the return from exile and the eventual coming of Jesus.

Discovering the theology of the Former Prophets. The books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings are narratives that carry the story of Israel from settlement in Canaan to the Babylonian exile. The questions before us are: What is there about this history that reveals the activity of God? What does this history reveal about God himself? Is Israel's story merely the "history" of a given people, or does it relate a story of what God is doing in and through Israel? Keep in mind that the idea of "prophet" in the Old Testament does not always include telling the future. The prophet speaks for God, communicating his intentions and attitudes. Prophetic messages called the people back to the covenant, issued warnings, and forecast future events.

Discovering the theology of the Latter Prophets. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Book of the Twelve are called the Latter Prophets. These books reveal the mind of God regarding ancient peoples. These revelations aimed primarily at bringing Israel back to covenant loyalty. But they also offered encouragement to Israel, pronounced judgment upon evil nations, and presented the picture of what God would do in the future. Like the presentation of Israel's history in the Former Prophets, prophetic pronouncements in the Latter Prophets had theological meaning.

Activity

Category One

1. Review the book of Joshua. Look for connections between the second generation and the first in view of the Sinai covenant (Exodus 19). How does Josh. 5:13-15 relate to the role of Yahweh in leading Israel? What is expected of Israel, now that the people have entered the land Yahweh swore to give them? What role did the recall of history play in the life of Israel? What was the importance of an occasional renewing of the covenant? See Joshua 24.

2. What is the recurring theme of the book of Judges? What contribution does Judges make to understanding the nature of God in the face of Israel's history?

3. How do 1 and 2 Samuel take the story of Israel forward? Look especially at 1 Samuel 8. What is wrong with Israel's request for a king? Is it not the idea that Yahweh's rule is resisted? Here and elsewhere in Samuel, Israel turns aside from following Yahweh completely. Does their lack of faith set aside the intentions of Yahweh? Does the faithlessness of any given generation keep God from completing his work?

4. Survey the books of Kings. Analyze the history of both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Eventually, judgment comes upon both for their faithlessness. What is the purpose of exile? How can God allow other nations to overrun both kingdoms when he has created Israel as his covenanted people? If Israel was chosen for the purpose of testifying about Yahweh before the pagan nations, what happens when they themselves succumb to pagan practices? If they were punished for their faithlessness, what did this do to God's intentions?

Category Two

1. Survey the book of Isaiah. What do you learn about God's relationship with all nations? Is Yahweh ever presented as being unconcerned with any people? Did his covenant with Israel show partiality? Did he expect less of the nations than he did of Israel? Did he expect less of Israel than he did of the other people groups? Look for the idea in Isaiah that Yahweh chose Israel for his purposes and that when Israel failed, he used a "remnant" in order to fulfill his promise to Abraham to bless all peoples through his descendants.

2. Review Jeremiah. Jeremiah lived about a century after Isaiah. He survived the capture of Jerusalem and witnessed the exile of the leading citizens of Judah. Is there anything in Jeremiah that suggests that God had given up on his promises to Abraham? Look especially at Jeremiah 31. To this point in Israel's history, the Sinai covenant has ruled supreme. Now, Jeremiah speaks of a new covenant.

3. Ezekiel is a difficult book, but theological themes are in some ways more pronounced here than in any of the preceding books. Pay special attention to the opening of the book. Who is in charge of the affairs on earth? Analyze Ezek. 34:17-31. The vision of Ezekiel runs past the exile through the post-exilic period to the New Testament era. Analyze the passage in view of its vocabulary, themes, and concepts. How do you separate the literal from the figurative parts of a vision?

4. Now turn to “The Book of the Twelve”—the Minor Prophets (Hosea through Malachi). With pencil in hand, write out what you believe to be the major theological messages of these books. Highlight key verses and identify key concepts.

5. Analyze Micah 6:6-8, then write a paragraph on the meaning of this passage.

Category Three

Consider the following questions.

1. How should the exile of Israel and Judah be interpreted in view of the covenant God had made with Israel?
2. How does a book like Hosea help one understand the relationship between God and Israel?
3. What role did kings and prophets play relative to keeping the covenant community faithful?
4. How would you characterize Israel’s covenant loyalty in the post-exilic period?

c. The Writings. The Writings include all the books of the Hebrew canon not included in the Torah and the Prophets. They represent an array of texts that were composed under very different circumstances and for a variety of purposes. As one might expect, interpreting them “theologically” is intriguing. We shall work with a sample of the Writings and not attempt to cover all of them.

Psalms. The Psalter was composed over a long period of time--perhaps a millennium. The Psalms express deep human emotions in an atmosphere of “worship.” Probably, they were used by the Jewish faithful in conjunction with both private and public devotional activity.

The Psalter provides insight into Old Testament spirituality from both a personal and community aspect. To be sure, the Psalms do not offer a different theology from the remainder of the Old Testament.

However, the nature of the compositions included in the Psalter provides an opportunity for some theological perspectives not possible through other forms of literature. The Psalms reveal the human soul's aspirations for the God of covenant love. In so doing, they reflect God's character, actions, and expectations.

What one should expect to find theologically is drawn from the way man approaches God and how he anticipates God will respond. In the process, one becomes aware of the assumptions made by the psalmists themselves. Why would one offer a lament to God, if he did not expect God to respond? Why would one offer thanks to a God he did not believe was listening? Why would he pray to God in a time of difficulty, unless he believed God could help? But then one must ask about motivation. Is God worshiped out of superstition and fear, or out of respect?

While much of what one learns about God comes from the psalmists' faith, God reveals himself in the Psalms. An enthronement psalm may declare God's feelings about his world, his people, and especially the king he has chosen to reign in Jerusalem. A psalm that references the Exodus may present God as the one who calls and delivers his people. All in all, the psalms offer a picture of God as creating, sustaining, caregiving, merciful, longsuffering, loving, just, righteous, holy, good, and judging. Man's relationship with God is worked out in keeping with God's graciousness.

The Psalms and other praise material follow conventional literary form. The structure governs interpretation. The major types of psalms are praise and laments. The use of parallel lines to express same, contrasting, or continuing thoughts is a common feature in Hebrew poetry.

Almost one-third of the psalms are laments. These express man's reflections during times of distress. As the lamenter cries to God with a plea for help, he may describe his situation, make confession of sin or profess his innocence, and thank God for deliverance. Laments may be on behalf of an individual or the nation. Psalms of confidence or trust are also classed as laments.

The Psalms offer a fresh view as to the nature of God and the divine-human relationship. God is treated neither as an idol to be appeased nor as some cosmic force to call upon when in crisis. He is not a despot, who acts without justice. Neither is he a lawgiver who holds a rod over his children to make sure they obey. He acts out of love, compassion, and mercy; yet, he keeps his word, expects holiness, and punishes evildoers.

Books of Wisdom. Wisdom is present in the Bible in numerous forms. Wisdom serves the human family by providing guidance to succeeding generations. It should come as no surprise that wisdom comprises a

significant part of the Old Testament. While its main focus is on the human experience, wisdom in the Bible reveals a great deal about God and his universe. Ultimately, it is not just understanding that matters, but living within the wisdom of God.

The beginning of wisdom is fear and respect for the Creator. He created the universe and revealed important things about how one should live in it. The universe of physical and animate objects attests to God's glory. The celestial bodies, physical elements, and life forms are part of that grand witness (Genesis 1; Job 37-39; Psa. 19:1-6; 89:1-13).

An important aspect of biblical revelation is that it does not confuse the Creator with the created. In some religions, the two are joined. This fusion attributes powers to the created objects--animals, ancestral spirits, rocks, and other objects. Consequently, the created receives worship. The powers become "gods" to fear and appease. But in the biblical record, God stands above the created substance of his universe. He alone is worthy of worship. He has not endowed the created with special powers over mankind. Whatever evil spells may be cast by the spirits are attributed to Satan.

Wisdom touches life at its most personal points—health, family, worship, and human relations. Theologically, God is involved in all phases and gives man responsibilities in all categories. From the biblical point of view, life is not predetermined? Illness and death occur, but not from a conspiracy of the created or dead ancestral spirits. Man does not get sick because he has offended the ancestors or forgotten to pay attention to sacred groves or rocks. Death is a consequence of man's sin. It may come because God has taken what is rightfully his. Often, but not always, health and long life result from walking with God. But even here, the result comes not from fulfilling superstitious rituals, but from a faithful journey. Fundamentally, health and illness, life and death occur because we live in an environment that suffers from man's sin.

Wisdom entertains theoretical questions that pertain to the realm of the spirit. The origin of wisdom lies with a sovereign God. He is the basis for retribution and morality, worship, and human responsibility, inner life, power, and divine revelation.

From **Proverbs**, we learn that God hates pride, deceit, killing, and dissension (Prov. 6:16-17). The "wise" person is respectful to parents, self-controlled, helpful to the poor, concerned about widows and orphans, and moderate in possessions (Prov. 15:20; 17:27; 19:17; 23:10-11; 23:24). Hence, wisdom literature speaks about the skill of living "the good life."

On first reading, one may assume that **Ecclesiastes** presents a pessimistic view of life. Writing from a position of old age, the author looks back over life and pronounces it as unsatisfying. Ecclesiastes must

be read as a whole and not broken into isolated pieces. Else, one will miss the point of the composition.

Truly, the author speaks as a wise man. None of the world's promised enjoyments were withheld from him. Whether it was wine, woman, or song, he enjoyed it to the fullest. He experienced enjoyment in everything he tried--his building projects and the pursuit of learning.

What is there that limits one's satisfaction and enjoyment? Is the author not talking about lasting, permanent satisfaction and enjoyment? What happens to his fortune when he dies? What happens in time to his building projects? Does the joy of the moment last? Of what benefit is there in amassing a fortune only to leave it to someone who will squander it? Would it not be better to enjoy your money while you are alive?

What is the crux of the matter? Is it that man should eat, drink, and be merry and die of excess? Should he have no regard for the poor? Should one disregard the needs of his family and die poor? Should he throw his life to the wind? Is there no accountability or no judgment? These are questions Ecclesiastes addresses.

Job is a drama that deals with faith in the midst of human suffering. The chief character, Job, is a righteous man who worships God regularly. The portrait of his children reveals an ideal family in a happy and God-fearing atmosphere. Job has been blessed by God with many riches. His life is a picture of beauty and faith. As the drama develops, Job is stricken at all points of his wonderful life. He loses his property and beautiful children in a single day! Not only that, Job is smitten with terrible sores from the top of his head to the sole of his feet. Why? That is the question Job wants answered.

The drama unfolds with Job's wife advising him to curse God and die. Job is sorry he was born. Friends who represent the finest wisdom of the area come to console him. But his friends attempt to provide an answer based on the wisdom of the day. They can only condemn Job, for in their wisdom a man does not suffer as does Job and be innocent of great sin. He has sinned and now he is getting his due. They counsel him to confess his grievous sin.

Job struggles to know why he is suffering. He admits to being an imperfect man, but he knows he has not committed the kind of sin that would bring about his relentless suffering. Job contends with God to tell him why. Job, of course, thinks and speaks without the benefit of the Prologue. The Prologue, which provides the reader with a proper frame of reference, reveals that God allowed Job to be placed in a difficult situation. Was it because he had sinned? No, far from it. Job was faithful to God. It was because of his faith that God allowed Satan to test him. In the end, God answers Job. The divine utterance reveals that hidden matters belong to God. Man's place is to put his faith in God. In the final analysis, God is to be

trusted to do right.

Other writings. In addition to Psalms and wisdom literature, the Writings include books where narrative is the dominant form and where historical writing appears as the leading feature. Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Ruth, Esther, and Daniel have unique purposes. Theological insight comes from analyzing the works in light of their purposes.

Chronicles recounts the story of Judah with a view toward faithful living in the restored community following exile. According to 1 Chronicles 16-17, God made a promise, which would prove to be important in the post-exilic period. Looking beyond the exile, the establishment of David's "house" would have further significance in the person of Jesus.

Ezra and **Nehemiah** reveal the status of events years after the return from exile and provide incentive for reform. During the post-exilic period, Israel again grew lax in her relationship with God. She needed to hear the call for repentance, confession, and specific action. The episode recorded in Ezra 9-10 describes but one occasion when sinful Israel was summoned to covenant loyalty.

Ruth provides the background for the ancestry of David with its focus on the providence of God. **Esther** sheds light on otherwise unknown events in Persia and provides the basis for the feast of Purim.

Daniel opens a window to the future of Israel and God's intentions. Perhaps his primary message is for those who will return home from exile and to the generations of their descendants who will face uncertain times. But the overriding theological message has to be concerned with God's intentions, especially with reference to his impending kingdom. Daniel 2 presents those intentions as clearly as they can be presented.

Activity

Category One

1. Open your Bible to Proverbs. Scan the book. List ten items that the composition considers "wise" things to do. Do you find that general principles apply to every human situation?
2. There is a balance between enjoying life and keeping the commands of God. Keeping God's commands is not so much living the ascetic life as it is living a life free of worry and greed. It is not really about indulging in purely human pleasures but enjoying the life for which God has created you. Read

through Ecclesiastes and make notes on the author's views of death and various affairs of life. Did not God intend for man to enjoy life? How does "fearing God and keeping his commands" fit with the theme of enjoying life?

3. In reading Job, recognize that not all "wisdom" is well-founded. Observe the "wisdom" offered by Eliphaz (Job 4-5). Note that in the previous chapters, Job's character and condition have been described and Job has just delivered his opening speech. Make note of areas where Eliphaz appears to be wrong. Give special attention to Job 4:7. Now, compose a statement that defines "faith" and "faithfulness" as seen in the book of Job.

4. Read again Daniel 2. What can you glean from the message that revolves around the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar? Look especially at verse 44.

Category Two

1. Analyze Psalm 8. What does the Psalm say about God? How does he interact with his universe, particularly with mankind? What role does nature play in Israel's praise?

2. Observe Psalm 13. This psalm is a lament. What does it teach you about how man may approach God and what he may expect God to do? Notice carefully the various components of the lament: address, complaint, petition, confidence, and praise.

3. Study the familiar Psalm 23. Analyze the psalm for its theological content.

Unit 3. The Source of New Testament Theology

Since the New Testament is dependent upon the Old Testament, New Testament theology hardly stands alone. Much of its substance interlocks with Old Testament texts.

The central message of the New Testament is the good news that God has sent his Son, Jesus, to provide human redemption. Jesus is the fulfillment of the blessing, which God promised through Abraham. The entire world awaited the action of God, an action that exploded with the incarnation. The New Testament is the written record of those events that centered on the coming of the Son of God to dwell among mankind in flesh and blood. Its goal is to draw sinners into a spiritual relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

There are several ways of doing theology. One is to take a full systematic approach and deal with topics. A second is to analyze separate biblical books to ascertain what particular insight they may render toward understanding God and his work. In the body of this syllabus, we will look at select New Testament compositions. The special assignments will tend to be more systematic.

New Testament theology focuses on the Greek Scriptures in an attempt to organize from that corpus various ideas about God and his work in Jesus Christ. Topics included in New Testament theology embrace everything that has bearing on those actions. There can be no adequate theology without the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

New Testament theology has limitations. Some questions are either difficult or have no answer that humans can comprehend. For example, the fusion of the deity and humanity of Jesus lies beyond human explanation. It calls for affirmation rather than explanation. In reality, theology may not be so much about *explanation* as it is *presentation*. Certainly, texts must be explained. But the phenomenon itself may remain puzzling. And there are some texts which escape modern explanation because of the distance of time and difference in culture. Still, the limitations do not negate the effort to reach general conclusions. The theologian will analyze various texts and draw conclusions about the meaning of individual topics. These individual topics will then be examined in light of other topics.

Because it is from God and because it is intended for all people, the gospel message carries authority. The message of the gospel is derived from Jesus, who is redeemer, king, and teacher. Jesus attributes the source of his teaching to God. He speaks nothing of himself; only what the Father gave him to say. This is especially the case in the Gospel of John.

The universality of the gospel is perhaps no better stated than in Romans and Hebrews. A critical point to examine is the finality of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Several implications arise. One is that Jesus is uniquely the one and only Savior in all the world for all time.

The Epistles appeal to fidelity to the central tenets and practices of the faith. The gospel is good news because its saving message is intended for people of every race and nationality. All human creeds and expressions of faith must be judged, therefore, by the biblical message itself.

God began revealing himself and his intentions for mankind through the Hebrew Scriptures. His intentions were not fully understood until after the resurrection of Jesus. The New Testament documents begin to show how God culminated his design for human redemption. Through Jesus' resurrection and exaltation,

God defeated Satan and provided spiritual life. The unit treats (a) the Gospels, (b) Acts of Apostles, and (c) the Epistles and Revelation.

a. The Gospels. The first recognizable division of the New Testament is that of "The Gospels." They are four in number. The first three parallel each other closely and, for that reason, are termed the "Synoptic Gospels."

The Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The Gospels of Matthew and Mark may have been directed to slightly different audiences (perhaps Matthew to Jewish believers and Mark to a Roman Christian audience), yet their general theme is the same. Theologically, they are in agreement. Although Luke is addressed to a man named Theophilus, the Gospel is indeed intended for a wider audience. And it anticipates the writing of Acts of Apostles, having been penned by the same author.

The Gospel of John. The Fourth Gospel is different from the Synoptic Gospels because of the material selected for inclusion. While all four Gospels present Jesus as the promised Messiah, John's Gospel has its own unique purpose. Be aware of its uniqueness as you read from the composition. John presents Jesus as the divine and eternal *logos* (Word), who became flesh. This "unique One" (only begotten of the Father) participated in creation, dwelt among us, was crucified, and rose from the dead.

Our immediate concern is to present in activity form several theological concepts that emerge in the Four Gospels. The sample of passages introduces themes as they occur in the text of scripture. Later, you shall have opportunity to look at some of these themes in a more systematic way.

Activity

1. Read Matt. 1:18-3:17. Identify key ideas. Look for ideas that give special significance to the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. Notice the use of Old Testament quotations. Examine these passages in their original setting and note the novel way that Matthew applies them. What does this tell you about the way "fulfill" should be defined? What is the major message of this passage?
2. Open your Bible to Matthew 5-7 and perform the same task as with the preceding selection. Can you identify themes that keep recurring? How would you describe the central message of the Sermon on the Mount?
3. Move on to Mark 12:1-12 and analyze the text as you did in the two sections above. What is the central

idea expressed in this Parable of the Tenants?

4. Read Luke 4:1-30. Note that Luke 4 embraces several incidents in Jesus' life. The first thirty verses tell of the temptation of Jesus following his baptism and his rejection at Nazareth. Your task is to ascertain the central message intended by the author. The Gospel is more than a simple story of Jesus' activities. There is a reason for telling about these episodes in his life. What do you think that may be?

5. In analyzing the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37, you will find that the parable was offered by Jesus in response to questions raised by a legal expert. For the parable to make sense, you must know what question it answers. Even then, there may be theological understanding that extends to the present time. What do you think?

6. In Luke 24:45-49, theological implications appear. Jesus "opened their minds so they could understand" the full meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures. What is the theological concept?

7. John 1:1-14. What does the passage say about Jesus?

8. In John 15:1-17, you need to establish the identity of the "vine." Then, decide to whom the speaker addresses his admonition. What point is he making? What is the significance of his point? How does this particular address apply to modern people?

9. John 17. What do you gather from the prayer of Jesus in John 17? How is the relationship he claims with God different from that which an ordinary person might have with God?

b. Acts of Apostles. The fifth book of the New Testament extends the story of its author, Luke. The Gospel according to Luke had laid the foundation for the material found in Acts. The continuing account carries the story of the execution of Jesus' commission to his apostles to preach the gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and elsewhere throughout the world.

Acts is written in historical style, but it is essentially a theological piece. The intent is not merely to tell interesting facts about the exploits of the apostles, but to describe how God's plan of redemption was broadcast and how his kingdom embraces all races of people.

A key theological component of Acts revolves around the fact and power of Jesus' resurrection. Had there been no resurrection, there would have been no apostolic message. That message was essentially that there is no name other than Jesus by which salvation is possible. Even the possibility is linked to Jesus' resurrection specifically. Since Jesus has been made both Lord and Christ by God himself, no human

qualifies as either the messiah or savior.

When reading Acts, note that the book's organization follows the general scheme of Jesus' commission. The gospel is declared first in Jerusalem. Since God developed his plan of redemption through the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the gospel is preached initially to the Jews. Inasmuch as Jerusalem was the place where God chose for his name to dwell and where the temple stood, it was proper for the church to start there. But Jesus had already signified that the time was near when physical place would no longer be significant (John 4:4-26). From Jerusalem, the gospel spread to Samaria, a place of mixed population and questionable loyalty to the Law of Moses. From thence, the gospel was carried to both Jews and Gentiles across the Roman Empire. So, while geography played a role in the organization of Acts, the theological interest of the book transcends place. It concentrates on the gospel and God's intention to call all people to himself through Jesus Christ.

Activity

Forming a church and maintaining it properly requires close attention to the aspect of worship, organization, and corporate activity. Visualize what an ideal local congregation of Christians might look like. Block out of your mind any preconceived concepts based on what you may have experienced. Using the Book of Acts as your resource, draft a description of the ideal church. This will be a profitable exercise in view of a discussion of the church in Module 3. Pay attention to the following passages:

Acts 2

Acts 5

Acts 6:1-7

Acts 8

Acts 10

Acts 13:1-3

Acts 15

Acts 17:10-34

c. The Epistles and Revelation. The epistles are occasional pieces, written to give a fuller explanation of the gospel, to encourage believers, or to bring correction to bad theology or practice. They differ in length and substance. Some are more pastoral than others. Each in its own way is a theological work.

Revelation is an apocalyptic composition that has no meaning apart from its christology and eschatology.

While maintaining its character as an "epistle," Romans is perhaps the closest any book comes to

presenting a "theology" of Christianity. Instead of looking at each book, we shall choose Romans to illustrate how New Testament theology is worked out.

Romans. The gospel declaration speaks distinctly of sin and God's impending judgment. Sin alienates one from God. But there is a way man can enjoy God's grace and forgiveness. The failure of the Jews to keep the law by faith and the Gentiles' refusal to acknowledge God present the human predicament. Without the intervention of God, that situation would have remained. But the activity of God in Jesus Christ has provided escape.

Paul's epistle to the saints in Rome is a thorough presentation of a simple theme: "The gospel is God's power unto salvation." The author shows that "righteousness" is of God and, furthermore, that those who come to righteousness must do so through faith in Jesus Christ. Justification before God is accessed through faith and not by of works of merit. The behavior that follows one's burial into Jesus Christ through immersion in water is in keeping with his newly found righteousness and the character of his Lord.

Romans is a proclamation of the revelation of God's righteousness. The gospel concerns Jesus, the Son of God. He entered the world as a Jew of the lineage of King David and was declared to be the Son of God by his resurrection (Rom. 1:1-4). The "gospel of God" had been promised through prophets, whose message formed part of the Old Testament (Rom. 1:2). Through Jesus Christ, God calls men to obedience of faith (Rom. 1:4-5).

God is faithful and righteous; therefore, he offers man the means to become righteous. The gospel is God's power unto salvation because in it God has revealed how man may become righteous (Rom. 1:16-17). Since the wrath of God is against all unrighteousness, gospel proclamation becomes urgent (Rom. 1:18-32). Rejection of Jesus lends to eternal damnation.

The judgment of God is according to truth. God's goodness and forbearance lead to human repentance. His wrath unto judgment is stored by hardness of heart (Romans 2). Human unrighteousness does not make God unrighteous when he judges unrighteous man (Rom. 3:1-8). Both Jews and non-Jews commit unrighteousness and find themselves in line for God's judgment. But God himself revealed unto men a righteousness to which all could attain (Rom. 3:9-31).

Having died to sin, the believer must no longer indulge in the sinful life. Having been baptized into the death of Christ, the believer has been raised through the glory of God to pursue a new life. The old man was crucified and the body of sin put aside. He has been justified and set apart for life unto God. Sin, therefore, is not to reign in the Christian. His bodily members are now instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:1-14). Inasmuch as the Christian has been justified from sin, he is free from its bondage to be a servant

of righteousness. Servants of God bear fruit unto sanctification and eternal life (Rom. 6:15-23).

The gospel is a message of victory. There is no condemnation in Jesus Christ, because the law of the Spirit of life frees one from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:1-4). The mind of the flesh is death, but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace (Rom. 8:5-25). The Holy Spirit helps the Christian in his weaknesses (Rom. 8:26-30), having been given as a guarantee of our inheritance (Eph. 1:13).

The gospel holds a demand for one's entire self. Believers are urged to give their bodies as a living sacrifice to God. They are not to be fashioned according to the world but transformed by the renewal of the mind unto the will of God (Rom. 12:1-2). Love, unselfishness, diligence, joy, prayer, service, hospitality, sympathy, unity, humility, restraint, honorable thoughts, peace, and the return of good for evil are marks of each Christian's life (Rom. 12:10-21).

The gospel declares this principle: Each one called of God is his servant. A servant has no right to reject his fellow servant because he is weak in faith. God will give him power to stand (Rom. 14:1-4). The gospel molds estranged people into a bond of love. The strong in faith are expected to bear the infirmities of the weak (Rom. 15:1). Disciples are required to build one another toward unity in Christ, for this is what their Master did for them (Rom. 15:2-7).

Law. Today, when we speak of "law" in general, we think of legal statutes. And when we think of laws in the Old Testament, we think of animal sacrifices, festivals, and an endless list of commandments that make little sense in the modern world. When we read of Jesus' encounter with the Pharisees, we see legalism at its worst. And when we read Paul in the New Testament, we tend to feel so liberated from law that it becomes virtually impossible to appreciate the place of law in the covenant Yahweh established with Israel.

The discussion regarding law in the New Testament has its own context. There, the discussion is about man's inability to find salvation through law keeping. The inadequacy of law is the focus. Surely, Christians are not under the Law of Moses in part or whole. But our effort here is to understand the place of the Law of Moses in the life of Israel.

It would be a mistake to think that the attitude assumed by the Pharisees in Jesus' day reflected the sense of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Pharisees postulated an "oral" law that provided an authentic, detailed interpretation of Moses' written law. The idea of an oral law arose after the completion of the Old Testament canon. So, one must be careful not to look at the Law of Moses through the eyes of first century Pharisees.

First, we should recognize that the Old Testament, Jesus, and Paul acknowledge that the Law had a divine origin and was given through Moses. There was nothing wrong with the Law. The Law given at Sinai was given in conjunction with the covenant Yahweh established. It became the standard by which Israel's faithfulness was judged. When Israel became unfaithful, it was because they had violated the covenant. That is, they broke the Law. They adopted idol worship. They became immoral. They abused the poor.

It is essential to understand that Israel's faithfulness was not determined simply by the laws they kept. Motivation often determined their standing before God. This was no less true of Cain (cf. Gen. 4:6-7) than it was of Israel (cf. Micah 6:6-8). The prophetic office was given primarily to calling Israel back to God. To call Israel back to God meant to call the people back to covenant loyalty. Covenant loyalty meant they followed the Law Yahweh gave them in the desert.

New Testament discussion notwithstanding, the Law served an important function for the people of Israel. They rose and they fell in concert with their diligence in keeping that law. Israel failed in the desert when they departed from the Law. They failed in Canaan when they forsook Yahweh for idols. They suffered exile when they refused to repent and follow Yahweh in keeping with the prescriptions of the Law.

Activity

To give you some experience at doing your own theological inquiry, work your way through the book of Galatians. Make notes as to what you believe to be the leading themes. Write out the connections you find between the work of God, the work of Christ, and the human response to God's provision of redemption. Compare your findings in Galatians with those of Romans. What are the differences? Having completed your analysis of Galatians, turn to James 2. How do James and Romans interconnect?

MODULE 2 The Divine Encounter

Theology begins with God. It seeks to understand him through his own disclosure to us. An understanding of God includes comprehending God's activity in behalf of man's spiritual need for redemption. A focus on redemption does not intend to ignore God's interest in man's physical, social, and mental well-being. Neither does it depreciate God's care for man in the midst of an environment that is often hostile to life and happiness. But redemption is the main subject of the Bible. By centering our attention on God's person and his acts with respect to redemption, we can then see the extension of his love into other areas of life on earth. We look to the sciences for deeper insights into God's physical universe.

The Old Testament reveals much about the nature and activity of God, his covenants with humanity, ethics, worship, institutions, legal codes, redemption and promises. When dealing with these topics, the Old Testament offers a consistent message. Its stories, psalms, wisdom, and prophecy come together to form a larger picture of God and his world, as themes are interwoven in the diverse literary compositions that comprise the Hebrew Scriptures.

The New Testament complements the Hebrew Scriptures and brings the theological ideas to full expression. Of particular import are the fulfillment of God's promised Messiah and salvation based on God's justifying act in Jesus Christ. Three subjects dominate the New Testament: God, Jesus Christ, and man.

From a biblical perspective, the Creator's interest in his prized creation--man--led him to enter the stream of human history. God moved history toward a crowning act that involved sending his Son to die for mankind. God is presented as a God of love, mercy, holiness, and justice. He acts on behalf of humanity and voluntarily becomes vulnerable to human action. He is not a weak God, but a bold and caring God, who will go to ultimate links to demonstrate his love and mercy. To be sure, God is holy and separate from his creation, but he is also intimate with it. The idea of the incarnation of God in Jesus is unparalleled in any human religion.

God always appears in the New Testament as the supreme being, the object of adoration and praise, just as he did in the Old Testament. This understanding was held in highest agreement by Jews in the 1st century. The contention between the Pharisees and Jesus turned on whether Jesus gloried God or whether his claims blasphemed God. Consequently, a key concern in addressing theology is how Jesus

fits between God and man. A haunting question is, How can he be both God and man? It is important to remember that Jesus never displaces God, who is the Father. He has come to do the Father's will and thereby glorifies the Father.

The module is divided into three units: (1) God, (2) Humanity, and (3) Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Unit 1. God

How can God be described in terms that the human can understand? How can a spiritual being be comprehended by a being who is confined to a physical realm? With what may one compare God? How can one know the mind and intent of God?

The Bible notes various media connected with reference to God's self-revelation. He revealed himself in creation. He spoke in dreams and visions. He was represented by angels. He revealed himself through miracles. Finally, he made himself known in Jesus. The Bible employs anthropomorphisms (features common to man, like speaking, touching, feeling) with reference to God's character and activity. Through all these means, we are introduced to the glory of God and the face of God.

In the Old Testament, God is sometimes represented by a special angel of the Lord. He is never to be represented by a human artifact. He is totally "other," yet he is near and attentive to what he has created.

In other religions, God may be inaccessible, identified with the created realm, appeased by human actions, confined to a role of handing out laws, or, at best, God may be understood to offer blessings that are conditioned on man's behavior. From a Christian perspective, God takes the initiative to do for man what man cannot do for himself. That initiative involved his Son's entry into the world in human form for the purpose of demonstrating his love. God's predetermined act made it possible for man to attain spirituality.

The religious aspect of the biblical record should be borne in mind and should control interpretation. Scripture is not basically polemical in nature. It does not set out to *prove* God but to *reveal* him. These scriptures assume the existence of God and his creative acts; they demonstrate God's vested interest in mankind. Since "theology" is centered in God's person and activity, it is reasonable to begin with God.

Since all of us come from different cultures, we are subject to varying cultural influences. To bring to the text of scripture ideas about God which have been projected from one's youth may lead to misconception.

For example, if God is perceived as harsh and unfair, it will be difficult to comprehend his love. If, on the other hand, love is understood as permissiveness, then one's understanding of God's holiness and justice will be skewed.

This unit is given to three aspects associated with God: (a) the nature of God, (b) the activity of God, and (c) other created beings and knowing God.

a. The nature of God. Biblical texts present God as (1) one, (2) personal, (3) sovereign, and (4) spirit. Attributes belonging to him include power, holiness and righteousness, and mercy and love. They also embrace faithfulness, glory, goodness, grace, justice, knowledge, uniqueness, and wisdom. While God cannot be reduced to simple abstractions, taken together, these attributes blend to present a wholesome portrait of God.

God will be understood best through his position and acts. God is creator, provider, father, king, and judge. Note the differences between the idea of "creator" and "father." If the idea of God as "provider" seems to contrast with that of God as "judge," it may be that a single image of God will prove inadequate to describe his being. In the absence of formal statements about God's nature, one is forced to look at incidental references, descriptions, and actions.

God's non-relational attributes are sometimes called his absolute, primary, internal, or passive attributes. They are primary in the sense that they explain the essence of God as he exists apart from created beings. In theology, to say God is transcendent means God as creator is distinct from all created beings.

In biblical terminology, "justice" and "righteousness" are synonyms. To say God is holy means he is absolute moral perfection and purity, that he is unconditionally upright in his essence and his actions.

Gentiles and Jews have always been responsible to God for their conduct. But through his covenant with Israel, God revealed himself in a concrete manner. He showed himself to a world that had either corrupted the worship of Yahweh with pagan rituals or had ignored Yahweh altogether. On the surface, one might conclude that God rejected the non-Hebrew world. Not so. Because he cares for all of his creation, God demonstrated his person to them through his relationship with Israel. Then, in a special way, God used his selection of Israel to project great future blessings for both Jews and Gentiles.

Activity

The aim of our "theological" quest is to compile and analyze those indications of God's nature, and then

to draw conclusions about them. See if you can pull together a composite picture of God. The human endeavor is limited, of course, but you are doing nothing but trying to understand what the Bible reveals about God. Write out on a piece of paper what *you* consider to be the portrait of God that the Bible writers present.

Read the following passages and write a one-page essay on "the nature of God." Make sure that you balance the various images. Keep your mind open, but read the biblical text carefully and reflect on it critically. Weigh your statements against the biblical text. And remember, the biblical text calls for faith, but it does not call for irrational conclusions.

Exod. 3: 1-15

Psalm 103

Isaiah 6

Ezekiel 1

John 3:16; 4:1-24

Acts 17:16-34

Rom. 1:18-32

Rom. 3:1-20

1 John 3:1, 16-24; 3:7-21

Revelation 4

Internet Sources

["What Is God Like?"](#) by J. Hampton Keathley, III, bible.org

["What Is God Like?"](#) by William C. Nichols

["What Is God Like?"](#)

["Is There a God?"](#) by Marilyn Adamson, EveryStudent.com

["Faith and Reason"](#) by James Swindal, *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

["The Christian God"](#) in Religion Facts

["Survey of Theology 1. The Doctrine of God"](#), St. John in the Wilderness

["Why Is God So Different in the Old Testament Than He Is in the New Testament?,"](#) gotQuestions.org

Textbook Reading

Erickson treats four topics: the greatness of God, the goodness of God, God's nearness and distance, and God's three-in-oneness. Read Erickson, chaps. 11-14.

b. The activity of God. Underlying the present reality of God's work is, of course, his past actions. These actions may be related to the creation of the universe, or they may be related to God's activity in response to the human condition.

Present action may also pertain to a variety of circumstances. What does God do with reference to the physical forces we see working in the universe? What does God do with respect to the evil forces that may exist in the universe? What does God do for individuals--both believers and non-believers?

The reason God has acted in the way he has toward mankind is twofold: his nature and the behavior of man. The Bible presents mankind as a special creation; his nature is unique among the creatures as well. Likewise, the act of sin and its consequences are peculiar to mankind. Creation, history, and God's continuing relationship with his creation are all related.

Yahweh's purpose. The God revealed in the Old Testament is the world's only God. He is not only the God of Israel, but he is the God who revealed himself especially to Israel at a time when peoples of the earth had adopted other objects of worship.

Yahweh's purpose is the primary thrust of the Hebrew Scriptures. The creation narrative shows why God felt it necessary to reveal himself in history. The frame of reference for understanding Yahweh's purpose is Exod. 5:22-6:8. This text indicates that God acted upon his purpose to bring the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob out of Egyptian slavery in order to fulfill his promise to build a nation that would witness to his presence in the world. After describing God's commission to Moses, the text proceeds to reveal the personal name of God, Yahweh, by which he is henceforth to be known to Israel. Yahweh's acts of judgment upon the idolatrous Egyptians would result in recognition of the real God of the world.

The Exodus 5 text will take on fuller meaning when it is seen against an historical background. That background begins with the creation narrative (Genesis 1-2). Without note as to time, except to say, "In the beginning," the author presents an account of creation that leads to one conclusion: One God has created the universe and all life in an ordered fashion.

Although Genesis 2 covers some of the same ground as Genesis 1, Genesis 1 presents a quick, ordered account of the entire creation. Genesis 2 informs the reader that the author is concerned only with one day of creation and with one element of that one day—mankind. Furthermore, the chapters that follow carry this interest forward, detailing only the occasion of sin, the consequences of sin, and God's initiative to deal with it. Chapters 1 and 2 are not rival accounts derived from different sources. They manifest a literary means for identifying those matters that are of premier concern to the author of Genesis.

The Babylonians had a creation story which differed in significant particulars from the biblical account. The people of Babylon had a lesser god (idol) whom they wanted to increase in power and reputation. So, their story represents the elevating of a god who could become greater than other gods through his creative acts. To read the Babylonian account against its background helps one see the contrasts and appreciate the biblical account.

The period of human history from Adam to Abram may be called the first period. In the text of Genesis 3-11, the author relates four stories: (1) the sin of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3), (2) the contrasts between Cain and Abel (Genesis 4), (3) the judgment/salvation of the world in the days of Noah (Genesis 6-9), and (4) the rebellious nature of man at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11). The stories are tied together through genealogies. From these stories, one is able to discover the intent of God for mankind, the role of Satan, the consequences of self-seeking, and the determination of God to offer mankind redemption. The four stories lead to the call of Abram.

Abram was a descendant of Noah through Shem. He lived in Ur, ancient Babylonia. God called him to leave his idolatrous city and go to a place he would show him—Canaan. At first glance, we read that God promised Abram (1) his descendants would become a great nation, (2) he would give him a great reputation, (3) he would bless him, (4) he would oppose those who opposed him, and one day (5) all the families of the earth would be blessed through him (Gen. 12:1-3). In analyzing the passage, the word blessing stands out. There is a sequence that runs, (a) God will bless, (b) Abram will be a blessing, (c) God will bless, and (d) all peoples will be blessed through Abram. The emphasis is on God, who will perform his great deeds through his vessel, Abram. So, perhaps we should not be so quick to enumerate what God will do for Abraham, but, rather, see the passage as a witness to what God is doing for all humanity through Abram. From this point forward, the biblical text describes how God's intended blessing came true. The ultimate promise prefigured the coming of Jesus (see Gal. 3:8-9), which means that the main point of God's promise to Abraham was that through his descendants, the entire world would receive a blessing.

God's intent is firm. However, how he will introduce his ultimate blessing is yet to be seen. At first, it appears that all of Abraham's descendants will be included in the special choosing. But in Gen. 25:19-23, we discover that the line chosen for this purpose runs through his son, Isaac, and his grandson, Jacob. Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel, became the forefather of Israel (the Jews). The text makes it clear that the choice was God's. The choice here had nothing to do with personal or communal salvation. The choice concerned God's actions in building a nation. That nation would become God's witness to an ancient pagan world and become the forebearer of Jesus. Romans 9 further clarifies the

sovereign will of God in the matter of preparing a people to fulfill God's purpose.

Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, was favored by his father and despised by his older half-brothers. One reason he was despised was that his dreams anticipated a day when the parents and older brothers would bow down to him. The older brothers sold Joseph to a group of slave-traders who resold him to an officer in Egypt. The story shows how, eventually, God revealed to Joseph the meaning of a dream of Pharaoh (the king) of Egypt. Joseph was appointed second in charge and given responsibility for preparing for a seven-year famine. It was this famine that led Jacob's family into Egypt, under the protection of Joseph. Over the next 400 years, a change in dynasty occurred in Egypt, the Israelites multiplied in number, and the Egyptians enslaved them.

Five centuries later, the establishment of David's house or dynasty emerges as a major event in Yahweh's activity. David's line would be the one through whom the Messiah would come. With the division of the kingdom following Solomon's death, the Davidic line continued in Judah. Jesus was born a descendant of David and thus of the right tribe to become king.

As the New Testament writer, Paul, develops the Ephesian letter, he declares that God has been at work in his world to create a holy community. He provides blessings through Jesus. He calls men and women to faith in Jesus. God has acted according to his own will and pleasure in his work of providing spiritual redemption. Those who respond to his act of mercy and grace live to God's praise.

The New Testament makes it clear that the way to salvation began with God, not man. As God's initiative was displayed throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, it is no less conspicuous in the Greek Scriptures. It takes a more direct form in the birth of Jesus Christ. Angels bear the word about Jesus' birth. God himself speaks at the baptism of Jesus and the transfiguration. The witness comes from above and not simply from Jesus or his disciples.

Signs of divine authority and authenticity are shown in the miracles performed by Jesus. The grand miracle of all is the resurrection of Jesus and his ascension to the right hand of the Father. Divine demonstrations of authority are also present with the apostles through an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' resurrection, God pronounces the defeat of Satan. Jesus' ascension to the right hand of God enthrones him as king and lord.

The idea of God's continuing relationship with creation is critical. He did not create and abandon. He involved himself in human affairs. How did God show his concern in a world of suffering, anxiety, and crushed hopes? Guard against seeing God as one who can be prompted to remove suffering and deprivation from his servants. On the other hand, do not limit God's involvement in human affairs. He

does sustain a continuing relationship with his creation. God's activity is not always understood or appreciated. But that is the difference between God and man. His role is sustainer; ours is to trust him.

The providence of God means the continuing action of God in preserving his creation and guiding it toward his intended purposes. Since the human is the highest of God's earthly creatures, the study of humanity brings to completion our understanding of God' work and, in a sense, of God himself, since we do learn something about the Creator by seeing what he has created.

Activity

1. Read and study carefully the following biblical texts: Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1; 17:1-6; 28:13; Exod. 3; 6:1-2; 19:3; 20:1-2; 33:18-23; 34:5-10.
2. Review Gen. 25:19-23 and Romans 9.
3. Review Genesis 50:19-20.
4. Review Eph. 1:3-14

Internet Source

"[What Does God Do? Divine Actives and Divine Passives in the Gospel of Matthew](#)" by Robert L. Mowery
 "The Old Testament in the Christian Bible," Augsburg Fortress Press
 "[Empiricism and Process Theology: God Is What God Does](#)" by David Miller

Textbook Reading

The Erickson textbook discusses under the heading, "What God Does" three topics: God's plan, God's originating work: creation, and God's continuing work: providence. Read Erickson, chaps. 15-17.

c. Other created beings and knowing God. God's work in the spiritual realm embraces the unseen world of good and evil spirits. It pertains to non-material elements, such as attitudes, intent of the will, emotions, and sinful behavior. The entire physical and spiritual universe is called into play. It is in this arena that God calls us to "know" him.

Other created beings. Within God's universe, other spiritual beings are present and active. Some work for righteousness; others work for evil. These beings include angels and demons. Angels acts out of reverence and respect for God; Satan and the demons act out of a rebellious spirit. Satan has power, but that power is controlled by God. The resurrection of Jesus signals the ultimate defeat of Satan.

Meanwhile, he is allowed to tempt and work his mischief. This serves the purposes of God in a way only he fully understands. Satan's name indicates he is an accuser or slanderer. He is also characterized as the devil, a liar, destroyer, sly, and a deceiver. With respect to evil, Satan is said to be the ruler of this world. Demons are generally considered to be fallen angels.

Angels are God's helpers. They praise God (Isa. 6:1-3; Luke 2:14; Rev. 4:8-11; 7:11-12). They are God's messengers (the actual meaning of the term "angel") (Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2). Angels minister to believers (Heb. 1:14), execute God's judgments (2 Sam. 24:15-17; 2 Chron. 32:21; Acts 12:23; Rev. 8:6-7), and engage in battle against Satan (Dan. 10:13; Rev. 12:7-9), and will come with Christ at the end of the age (Matt. 16:27; 2 Thess. 1:7-8).

Knowing God. Theology is concerned with man's understanding of God and his actions. Two aspects of the quest are portrayed in Scripture itself: one is to know "about" God and the second is to "know" God in relationship. God intended for mankind to live in close relationship with him, a relationship whereby man would "know" God. To be satisfied with information about the creator of the universe short-changes the process of theology, which has as its goal the bringing of the creature into relationship with the Creator.

In Exod. 6:7, the word "know" can take on several meanings: having information in mind, a skill (knowing how to do something), understanding (comprehension), personal acquaintance (as with a friend), knowing of someone (as one knows a famous person), intimate insight (as one knows what another would or would not do), sexual relations, knowing by experience (as with an illness), ethical decision (knowing what choice to make). When used in Scripture for the God-man relationship, to "know" God embraces an intimate walk with him and involves the total person. Information alone is not the knowledge of which Scripture speaks when it refers to knowing God.

To "know" God is to allow him to be God and act as he pleases. One who knows God can be assured that God is always right (Job 42:1-6; Isa. 55:8). Knowing him entails "waiting" for him to act (Isa. 30:18). The opposite action is to take matters into one's own hands, question God's actions, and generally disregard him.

Knowing God also demands a right attitude of heart (Jer. 24:7). God will not force one to love him. But he invites loving response to his acts of love. God is said to have promised Israel to give her a new heart, but that hardly means he would do so against her will.

To know God is to defend the cause of the poor and needy (Jer. 22:11-17). The Scriptures make it clear that to "know" God is to defend the cause of the disadvantaged and the defenseless. King Jehohaz was

condemned because he enjoyed personal luxuries at the expense of the poor. His father, King Josiah, had demonstrated a kind of righteousness that was absent in Jehoahaz. Jehoahaz needed to realize that luxury did not make one a king--only righteousness could do that.

To know God is to resist God's opponents (Dan. 11:32). Those who "know" God will identify with right and stand against evil. This is easier when an "enforcer" of evil is not nearby. Resisting, not compromising, is what distinguishes God's man/woman.

Activity

Read the following passages, then analyze the points that follow.

Gen. 3:1-19

Job 1:1-10

Matt. 4:1-11; 12:22-37

Luke 10:18

2 Cor. 11:14-15; 12:7-10

Eph. 6:10-17

1 Pet. 5:8-9

Jude 8-9

Rev. 12:9

Revelation 18-20

1. There is also a sense in which God is known in the larger world. The universe of physical and animate objects attests to the glory of God. The celestial bodies, physical elements, and life forms are part of that grand witness. Read Job 37-39; Psa. 89:1-13.

2. There have been many events through which God has been known: casting Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden, the Flood, the Exodus, the conquest of Canaan, the destruction of Jerusalem (586 B.C.E.), to name a few. For Israel, a most important event was the Exodus. There were the "signs" (plagues), but more importantly, Israel saw a God they could trust. See Exodus 7-15.

3. While the "image" of God is not removed from man in the sin of Adam and Eve, its brightness may have been diminished. In Jesus Christ, man is renewed in God's image, where he is made to be like God in righteousness and holiness. Compare Gen. 1:26-27 with Eph. 4:22-24.

4. Moses wanted to see God's glory. But how could he look upon the face of God? There is a great distance between man and God. Yet, God is not wholly removed from man. Observe Exod. 33:12-23.

5. The prophet Hosea declared to wicked Israel that there was no faithfulness, no love, and no acknowledgment of God in the land. Instead, cursing, lying, murder, stealing, and adultery abounded. Truly, the people had no "knowledge" of God and faced exile. Read Hosea 4. Does knowledge here refer to "understanding" or "relationship"?

6. The human being is limited by his creator. There is much he does not know or understand about this world. Oh, how much he does not understand about the Creator and his ways! To "know" God is to allow him to be God and act as he pleases and be assured he is always right. Neither his thoughts nor his ways are ours (Isa. 55:8). Read Job 42:1-6.

7. Knowing God entails "waiting" for him to act (Isa. 30:18). It is the opposite of taking matters into one's own hands. The principle is illustrated in Isaiah 36-37.

8. In what ways did men and women in Israel "know" God emotionally and experientially?

9. Psa. 9:10 states, Those who know Yahweh trust in him; he never forsakes those who seek him. What does it mean to "trust" God? What is implied in the idea that God never forsakes us?

10. The prophet Habakkuk (active 609-597 B.C.E.) struggled with the question of right, even-handed divine retribution. Why does God not act against evil? Why does it take him so long to do so? How can God use evil people to afflict people who are less evil?

Internet Sources

["Angelology: The Doctrine of Angels"](#) by J. Hampton Keathley, III

["Angels--The Truth"](#)

["The Eight-Fold Way to Knowing God"](#) by Lambert Dolphin

Textbook Reading

Read Erickson, chaps. 18-19. Erickson examines the subjects of evil and angels.

Unit 2. Humanity

From a theological point of view, one's understanding of the human being is drawn from the Scriptures. Scripture informs questions about man's origin, what distinguishes man from animals, his basic nature, and his standing before God. Natural science, anthropology, sociology, and psychology are the primary sources for other details about what constitutes the human and how he functions.

Four major issues emerge in theological discussion about mankind: the origin of man, the nature of man, God's involvement in human affairs, and man's response to God. The question of origin has a long speculative history, which took on a new dimension with the appearance of the theory of evolution in the 19th century. A symbol of purposed creation is the idea that God made man in his own image, which the New Testament suggests is related to God's holiness. Present discussion turns on one of three positions: (1) God created man for honor to himself, (2) man appeared by chance and therefore exists apart from God, or (3) God has turned over to man the right to his own body/self.

A second issue pertains to man's nature. The lead question is, Did man's nature change as a result of Adam's sin? Conjoined with the question are others. Was the guilt of Adam's sin passed along to succeeding generations? Or, was Adam only a bad example and a negative influence on his descendants? The point at issue is not whether there were consequences to Adam's sin, but whether Adam's sin affected human nature so that man became totally evil, devoid of any good action.

The third issue relates to God's involvement in the world. This includes the offer of redemption and providential care. Can man attain salvation? If so, does he attain it by works of law or by divine grace? Is man dependent upon God for all his needs or should he call upon God to supply only what he is incapable of supplying for himself?

A fourth issue concerns the God-man relationship. It has two prongs: God's sovereignty and human responsibility. Given his nature, can man respond to God spiritually? Does God control man totally? If so, how can there be freedom of the human will? Or, does man control his own destiny? If so, where is the need for God?

The Bible affirms God created man for a devout reason. It points to both the sovereignty of God and the exercise of human will. Even in the area of salvation, man bears responsibility for whether he wishes to respond to the grace of God. The human will does not set aside God's sovereignty but operates within limits set by God. The primary effect of the sin of Adam may not be on man's nature, but on the witness to every person's need for redemption, which God himself enables.

God expects man to respond to his presence much as a son is expected to respond to his physical father. The nature, source, and the results of sin are primary interests of theological inquiry, because sin hinders this relationship. The impairment calls for action by both God and man.

a. The nature of man. Discovering the nature of man helps one understand God's activity on man's behalf. The New Testament presents no formal systematic doctrine of man. Rather, the concern of the writers was for man in relation to God. So, the focus is more theocentric than humanistic.

Man is the most important part of the created order. Human life has unthinkable value when considered in light of what God did in Jesus Christ. God's initiative provides renewal to the image, which man is expected to emulate.

Man does not live in a vacuum. He inherits culture from those who lived before him. He is surrounded by other people who influence him. And he behaves in keeping with expectations of others or in ways that agitate others. The physical nature of man is thereby impacted by his environment. His free will means he is capable of responding in a variety of ways. He may be born clean, but he does possess a disposition toward sin. And he will become a sinner before God, being fully responsible for his sin.

The failure of man is seen in sin and guilt. But the ideal is a redeemed person, living in spiritual harmony with God. If man were in charge of his own destiny, he could do as he pleases. By exercising his free will, he sometimes attempts to do just that. But God intends for man to live in harmony with divine ideals. When he fails to do so, he is offered redemption, which man himself is unable to attain without God.

A spiritual relationship with God implies holiness and god-likeness. Inasmuch as God is the source of these qualities, the ability to be holy rests with God. By contrast, mankind is sinful, rebellious, and unrighteous. Through Jesus Christ, one becomes a new creature and is made anew in holiness.

The Bible describes how man becomes righteous through the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ. A subjective feeling about one's relationship to God has no validity unless it coincides with the written text. Since holiness is attained through faith, the human has no claim to it otherwise. Faith is made complete through submission to faith's demands.

Activity

Read the following passages and write a one-page essay on the nature of man.

Genesis 3-4, 6

Judges

Heart--Exod. 35:21; Psa. 73:26; Eccl. 11:10; Ezek. 44:7; Matt. 22:37; Rom. 2:28-29; Heb. 10:22; 1 Pet. 3:4

Spirit--Deut. 2:30; Ezra 1:1, 5; Psa. 142:3; Ezek. 18:31; Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59; Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 2:11; 5:5; 14:32; 1 Pet. 3:19; Heb. 12:23

Soul--(a) spiritual nature: Psa. 63:1; 84:2; Matt. 10:28; 2 John 2; Rev. 6:9; (b) self: Exod. 1:5; 12:14; Psa. 16:10; Ezek. 18:4; Acts 2:41; 27:37; Rom. 13:1; 1 Pet. 3:20; (c) life: Lev. 17:14; Matt. 6:25; 16:26; John 10-11; Acts 15:26

Internet Sources

"[Life after Death: What Is the Nature of Man](#)" by Mark A. Copeland, Executable Outlines, 2009

"[What Is the Nature of Man](#)" by Hampton Keathley IV, bible.org

"[The Nature of Man](#)," Jeremiah Project

Textbook Reading

Erickson's chapters are devoted to the doctrine and origin of humanity, the image of God, human nature, and the universality of humanity. Read Erickson, chaps. 20-24.

b. The human condition. Mankind appears in a "lost" condition. From the biblical perspective, sin is a consequence of attitude or behavior that runs counter to God's desires. It is a failure to allow God to be God and attempting to usurp his position or blame him for an act. It is a failure to think and act in spiritual ways. Sin is refusing to do good when the opportunity arises.

Wickedness is ever present and man cannot escape it. While the biblical text comes short of pronouncing man as evil, it leaves no doubt that his condition is bad and in need of redemption. Forgiveness of sin can be granted only by God. And only God can provide the *means* for forgiveness. Otherwise, man would be in control of his own destiny. God, through Jesus, calls man to live to his glory and embrace those features of character that reflect his nature.

As the apostle Paul noted in Romans, mankind demonstrated both unwillingness and an inability to find justification before God. The Jews failed to keep the Law of Moses; the Gentiles failed to keep the law of conscience. Consequently, both fell under the condemnation of God due to their unrighteousness. Only God could provide a means to righteousness. And that was not to be done through either the Law of Moses or a law of conscience. It was to be done through a supreme sacrifice of the Son of God. Whether Jew or Gentile, redemption would come to both in the same way. So, the Hebrew Scriptures projected how this would be accomplished. The prophets often spoke of the coming of a messianic figure, the establishment of a new covenant, and God's future actions.

Theological debate over "original sin" has revolved around the extent to which man may "participate" in his own salvation. One side of the debate tends to emphasize the grace of God at the expense of human responsibility. The other side comes down hard on human response in obedience. There is a balance here, and our quest is to find it.

Activity

Read the following passages and write a one-page essay on the human condition.

Jer. 17:10

Ezek. 18:20

Matt. 5:21-22; 6:12; 18:23-35

Luke 13:4

Rom. 1:18-32; 3:19

Rom. 7:7; 14:12

Eph. 2:1-10

Rev. 2:23

Internet Sources

["Meanings of Life"](#)

["What Is Sin? Definition"](#)

["The Human Condition in World Religions"](#) by Ernest Valea

["The Creation of Man \(Genesis 2:4-25\)](#), Answers in Genesis Ministries International

["Divine Diagnosis of Man's Heart"](#) by P. G. Mathews, Grace Valley Christian Center

Textbook Reading

Erickson considers the nature and source of sin. Read Erickson, chaps. 25-26.

c. The result of sin. The "natural" state of man is to be alive, not dead. If this is true in the physical realm, it is also true in the spiritual realm. Man dies physically due to the act of sin. But more significantly, he dies spiritually when he himself sins. The goal of physical death is resurrection. The goal of spiritual death is resurrection to new life and, ultimately, to eternal life as well (cf. Romans 5-6).

Sin carries consequences. The most serious consequence is that it impairs one's relationship with God in a spiritual sense. When God created the first human pair, he placed them in a beautiful garden and provided all their needs. The idyllic relationship lacked nothing. God enjoyed an intimate fellowship with Adam and Eve, communicating with them in the garden. Their circumstance was perfect. They had only to tend the garden and live unto the praise of God. They were commissioned to trust him. Rather, they chose to pursue a path that they believed would lead to independence from God. Satan had convinced them they could become as God. He convinced them that God did not have their best interest in mind when he withheld from them the fruit of knowledge of good and evil. In eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve separated themselves from a trust relationship with God and forfeited the close fellowship they once enjoyed. Consequently, God excluded them from the garden.

Further consequences of sin included hard physical labor for the man and pain in childbearing for the woman. Ultimately, they and each of their descendants either have or will experience death.

Sin also brings hurt to self and others. Modern people understand this phenomenon very well. Alcoholism, drug addiction, and illicit sex can lead to a life dependency, disease, dissipation, and loss of self-respect. Murder, theft, greed, cursing, etc. heap upon others affliction, misery, and heart break.

Activity

Read the following passages and write a one-page essay on the result of sin. In the essay, define the result of sin and demonstrate the effects of sin on human life.

Gen. 2:15-17

Gen. 3:17-19

Genesis 4

Genesis 6

Rom. 8:18-22

Heb. 2:14-15

Internet Sources

[Romans 8:18-19 Commentary](#)

[From Groaning to Glory](#) by Bob Deffinbaugh, bible.org

Textbook Reading

Read Erickson, chaps. 27-29. Erickson discusses the results of sin, the magnitude of sin, and the social dimension of sin.

Unit 3.Christ and the Holy Spirit

Messianic themes are not dominant in the Hebrew Scriptures, but they are significant. Whereas most of the Old Testament is concerned with Israel's occupation of Canaan, the Scriptures do look forward to a new order. The unit focuses on the future that the Hebrew Scriptures anticipate.

The story of Jesus does not stand in isolation; it stands as the conclusion to a longer history. With the context of world civilization, biblical scripture reveals the history of Israel in a unique way. Through Israel's historical experience, mankind can see how God has acted in his world for the spiritual benefit of all mankind. God not only controls history; he allows the nations to participate in Israel's history. So, the story of Jesus is not simply the story of a Jewish messiah; he is everybody's messiah.

If human redemption involves God, who is a spiritual being, it should be no surprise to find references to spiritual forces and personalities connected to the redeemed. Neither should one be surprised to find an expected turn of events with the introduction of Jesus. Given the promises and projections found in the Old Testament, one should expect someone special to appear in Jewish history. The New Testament opens the Old Testament to a more glorious conclusion than could have ever been anticipated from the Old alone. Likewise, the experience of Old Testament life is affirmed through the disclosure that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham.

A reading of the Old Testament without knowledge of the New leaves a rather disparaging situation. According to Malachi, the last book in the Hebrew Scriptures, Israel is still clinging to sinful practices. Their political future is uncertain. A messianic savior is nowhere to be found. But with the introduction of Jesus into the world, the Hebrew Scriptures take on new life and meaning.

Promises made and fulfilled are only a part of the story of Jesus. He stands at the head of a new history-- a history of salvation. As important as the foregoing is, the mission and teaching of Jesus are the goals to which the Old Testament points. Even Jesus' testing in the wilderness presents a backward look at the implications of the Jewish Scriptures for faithfulness.

An integral part of the work of God and Christ is the Spirit of God. Commonly referred to as the "Holy" Spirit, God's Spirit is present in creation, in revelation, and in the sanctification of the redeemed.

a. The person of Christ. Central to the Christian gospel is a heavenly figure who took the form of a human and revealed in his person the nature of God. But the "person" of Christ is only one part of the christological story. Of equal importance is what Jesus accomplished on mankind's behalf. Jesus announced the good news about the kingdom of God, which he himself was now bringing to men. But Jesus was more than simply a teacher and prophet to the church; he was also the Messiah. He was at once the bearer of the message and its essential content. This One who simultaneously revealed the mind of God and became the instrument of human redemption is the focus of the gospel.

Familiar phrases draw on Old Testament pictures and patterns help to identify Jesus. But the ultimate question, "Who is this Jesus?" leaves much to ponder. What is the Old Testament background for the declaration, "This is my Son?" How is the Old Testament used in the New in relation to Jesus? How did Jesus think of himself in view of the Old Testament? Just as sonship was an important concept in describing Israel's relation to God, so it is woven into the language of the New Testament to depict the relation between God and Jesus.

A divine figure. Numerous titles are ascribed to Jesus that indicate that he is more than mere man. He is referred to as *Lord*, *the Son of God*, and *the Logos*. Through a series of "*I am*" sayings, Jesus declared himself to be both the avenue to eternal life and the protector of those who pursue that life.

Unique events, which accompanied the coming of Jesus, distinguish him as the messiah. The preexistent Christ was born into this world of a virgin; the *virgin birth* signals divine intervention into the birth process; The *resurrection* of Jesus announces triumph over the power of Satan. The *ascension* of Jesus to God's right hand gives Jesus a position of rule.

Outside the subject of God, there is no other subject so important to the story of the Bible as that of Jesus Christ. Although born into this world, Jesus is the Unique One, who is co-eternal with God. Associating Jesus with God is repugnant to some. But it is an affirmation that is essential to the Christian faith. It sets

Christianity apart. Consequently, the idea of Christ's deity lies at the center of ongoing controversy regarding the validity of the Christian faith.

A doctrine called Docetism developed in the early period to express the idea that Jesus *seemed* to be human. The proponents of the idea were trying not to acknowledge that Jesus was indeed human in an effort to protect his divinity. Others projected the view that Jesus began as a mere man, but, because of his exemplary life, God honored him by taking him as his own Son. This view was labeled Adoptionism. None of these explained the duality of Jesus and, in fact, each denied basic tenets of his person. His own claim to deity was well understood, for the Pharisees had earlier turned on Jesus. They believed he robbed God of his glory and thus became blasphemous.

While Hebrew prophets spoke of the coming of a messiah, the full identification of that messiah with Jesus takes place in the New Testament. The Gospels record the miracles and teachings of Jesus that point in that direction. Heavenly declarations at the baptism of Jesus and at the transfiguration confirm it. And the scene surrounding the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus give further testimony to his unique person.

From the biblical perspective, Jesus is more than a hero, a mythical figure, or a mere example of good. He is the Holy One of God to whom men and women are drawn for salvation. The Gospels present Jesus as an incarnated divine being, the Son of God, who came to earth for the purpose of renewing men in the image of God. The narrative of each of the Four Gospels moves toward the general conclusion that he is the Savior, whose mission was to bring men into a spiritual relationship with God and enable them to experience eternal life.

The question as to whether the claim to "sonship" makes Jesus a rival of God is answered in the Gospel of John. Rather than taking glory *from* God, Jesus asserted that he had come to give glory *to* God. He did only what the Father sent him to do. He did nothing on his own. He fulfilled the will of the Father to offer mankind redemption in a way that originated with God and not with man. A consequence of his faithfulness to God was the resurrection and ascension to God's right hand.

The uniqueness of Jesus. The culmination of God's activity with respect to man's redemption centers in Jesus Christ. Jesus was no ordinary person. What specifically is unique about him?

Jesus is "holy" because he is divine. An old man named Simeon and an aged prophetess named Anna knew that Jesus was more than a mere baby. He was God's salvation to the world (Luke 2:25-38). The apostles Peter and John knew Jesus to be God's holy Servant, whom God himself anointed (Acts 4:23-

30). Jesus is God's Son. Eternal with God and creator with him, Jesus is the effulgence of his glory and the very image of his substance. He presently sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven (Heb. 1:1-4).

Jesus had a unique relationship with God. Jesus demonstrated an intimate relationship with God in numerous ways. He performed miracles that attested to an intimate relationship with God (Matt. 9:2-6; John 14:10-11; 20:30-31). His teaching and his behavior showed divine character (Matt. 7:28-29; 15:32-38; Mark 8:1-9; Luke 8:31-32; John 5:19-40; 7:37-46; 11:33-38a). Events associated with his baptism (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:29-34), the transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-5), and his resurrection (Acts 1:3) revealed Jesus' sonship.

Jesus' claim for an intimate association with the Father focuses attention on his unique person. Jesus' relationship to Abraham and God's promise to Abraham underscored his uniqueness (John 8:31-59). The Jews charged him with blasphemy and took him to Pilate and demanded crucifixion. A sharp division arose over whether he was the Christ (John 10:19-42). Jesus challenged men to holiness through observance of his words and love for one another. (John 15). The four Gospels relate the intimate association of God the Father and God the Son, and this relationship is a constant theme in the Gospel of John.

Titles worn by Jesus. Several titles or designations identify Jesus in relation to institutions, families, or roles. Jesus is given the title *Messiah* (Hebrew) or *Christ* (Greek), which means "anointed one." He is the *Son of David*, a designation that indicates he was born of the lineage of David and is entitled to kingship. He is the premier *servant*, imagery derived from the Old Testament that describes Jesus' role. Jesus is an anticipated *prophet* and *teacher*. The anticipation of a prophet held great hope for Israel. He is the *Son of Man*, a self-identification by Jesus, which seems to have served his intent to show his human connection. "Messianic" expectations are those anticipations that pertain to the "anointed one." In Psalms 2, the Anointed One is the king of Israel, the one Yahweh appointed as his representative. The nations surrounding Israel might conspire against Israel, but they had no chance of succeeding against Yahweh's anointed. The writer of Hebrews brings forward this concept and applies it to Jesus. Jesus, as God's Messiah (Anointed One), has come from God to bring deliverance or salvation. To conspire against him will only bring defeat. Victory is in Jesus.

Psalm 110 carries the Messianic expectations a step farther. Yahweh certainly has the Son, Jesus, in mind here, as both Acts and Hebrews confirm. Jesus is given reign over God's heritage. Furthermore, he is appointed a high priest, not after the order of Aaron but after the order of Melchizedek. The combination of the kingly and priestly roles in Jesus is very significant for the role Jesus plays in God's plan for human salvation/deliverance.

The Jews had long nurtured aspirations for a coming messianic figure. Even specific titles had appeared--the Messiah, the Son of Man, and the Servant of the Lord. The mission of the Servant is treated from the Old Testament witness, but it also has implications for the Gentiles and believers who live presently. In the Servant Songs (especially Isa. 52:13-53:12), Isaiah anticipated the coming of a "servant." The servant he projected was Jesus. Through the projection of a "suffering" servant, it is easy to see that God's concept of greatness was one of humility and loyalty.

Jeremiah projects the kind of covenant that will become the basis of salvation in the days of the Messiah. Zechariah anticipates a king who will bring righteousness and salvation (Zech. 9:9). The New Testament applies the reference to Jesus (Matt. 21:4-5). God works in ways man does not expect. Man's expectations often run counter to God's, for man counts greatness in terms of human achievement. It is God's values that count in the long run. God uses simple things to confound the wise and makes salvation available to all--not through human accomplishment but through covenant loyalty. The Messiah himself appeared and behaved in ways the self-sufficient person could never appreciate. But to those who receive him, he gives the power to become the children of God (John 1:10-13).

Jesus is Savior, for salvation is not a human achievement that results from an intensive human effort. Divine forgiveness and eternal life come from God, who has acted in Jesus. Jesus, who was revealed as the messiah spoken of through the Hebrew prophets, became the redeemer through the cross, and now serves believers as intercessor with the Father. This is what separates the Christian faith from that of all world religions.

The humanity of Jesus. The identity of Jesus and his ministry lie at the heart of the Gospel story. Was Jesus fully man? Did he share with humanity the same feelings and struggles? Did he possess human weaknesses? There are, of course, limitations to our search into the humanness of Jesus. But the fact that cannot be denied is that the New Testament presents Jesus as fully human and fully divine.

The sinlessness of Jesus is treated as an identification with the will of God. He was tempted in all points such as we, yet he did not succumb to those temptations. He kept his eye on doing the Father's will.

Some cautions. Since the New Testament, many explanations have been offered as to the nature of Jesus and his relationship with God. Out of some of the early discussion came the expression "trinity." The term was offered as a way to explain the unexplainable. For our purposes, we shall be concerned to discover what the New Testament witness offers regarding the person and work of Jesus and not give ourselves to speculation beyond that. While this study does not move into post-biblical discussion, it will prove helpful to see what the issues were.

Many ideas about the nature of Christ have arisen during the two thousand years since Christ was on earth. Some of these ideas may have influenced current thinking. You should be aware of the issues at hand and the presumptions that have been brought to the discussion. Your task is to filter out the non-biblical concepts and concentrate on the New Testament witness. Remember, the role of Jesus in human redemption calls for response, not necessarily explanation.

The view that Jesus began as merely a man, but, because of his exemplary life, God honored him by taking him as his own Son is called Adoptionism. The idea was born to explain how a purely human Jesus could have become the "son" of God. But this denies the deity of Jesus and negates his work.

Activity

Go back to the passages cited above and read them from your Bible. Add to these John 1 and Hebrews 1. As you read, write out the basic concepts you find within these texts. First, see if you agree with the statements made in this syllabus as a summary of those texts. Then, write out the implications. Note the assumptions that are being made in order to support your conclusions. For example, one assumption may be that the Bible presents Jesus accurately. If so, then the conclusions drawn from the authors of scripture have great significance. If not, then what the authors say has no merit at all. What other assumptions are being made?

Study the following passages carefully:

John 1:1-14. In John 1:1-14, you must first identify the person addressed as the "Word." Who is he? What relationship does he sustain to deity and to God himself? What did the Word do that was so significant? How did the Word reveal himself and God? What would be the ramification of denying the divinity of the Word?

John 1

1 Tim. 3:16

Hebrews 1

What was Israel's messianic expectation?

Internet Sources

["Christology," Believe Religious Information Source](#)

["The History of Christology"](#)

"Christology," New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia

Textbook Reading

Erickson discusses contemporary issues in christological method, the deity of Christ, the humanity of Christ, the unity of the person of Christ, and the virgin birth. Read Erickson, chaps. 30-34.

b. The work of Christ. Traditionally, the work of Jesus has been classified in terms of three basic functions: his reconciling work, his revelatory role, and his rule. The Hebrew term most commonly used in the Old Testament for the various types of atonement is *kaphar*, which means "to cover." The concept that best explains the meaning of Christ's death is "propitiation" (atoning sacrifice, NIV, 1 John 2:2; 4:10) which carries the idea of an offering that turns away wrath.

Matthew used a fulfillment phrase ("This was to fulfill") to describe how Jesus is the completion of the Old Testament story. Throughout his ministry, Matthew saw connections with Israel's history. He understood that the words he was quoting from the Old Testament had a fulfillment in Israel's history, but that they also had a forward look toward perfect fulfillment in the Messiah. The word for this kind of perfecting fulfillment is "prolepsis." The Gospel of Matthew introduces Jesus as a descendant of the Jews. The lineage of Jesus is traced from Abraham through King David. Indeed, the entire story of Israel works its way to Jesus, the promised Messiah. Jesus appeared as a real Jew, a real man, and the son of David. He appeared at the end of a long period of preparation and signals a new beginning.

Micah and Hosea provide the reader with some features of expectation about the Messiah, which do not come into full view until one studies the Gospel of Matthew. The passages noted above may refer to occasions in Israelite history, but Matthew enriches the meaning as he makes application to the birth of Jesus and the family's exodus from Egypt. Understanding Matthew's fulfillment phrase becomes critical to an appreciation of Jesus as the Messiah, because it unveils the panorama of God's activity with Israel, from Abraham to Sinai to David to the New Covenant.

Several theories have arisen as to how Christ accomplished the atonement for sin. One is the "satisfaction" theory, which emphasizes that Christ died to assure a principle in the very nature of God. Another is known as the "ransom" theory that holds a ransom was paid--presumably to Satan. In reality, no human attempt to explain how Christ's blood atones for human sin--except in the mind of God. The language itself must have a symbolic meaning; explanations should not look to literal explanations.

Land and messianic expectations. Bound up with messianic expectations is hope that the land once occupied freely by Israel would again come to be theirs without foreign domination. Many in the Christian

world believe it will once again become important to the purposes of God and is part of an eternal, unconditional promise to Israel.

The section on land is included here because it occupies such a prominent role in the Old Testament story. The land was important to the promise God made to Abraham, because it was within an earthly territory that God would demonstrate his presence in the world. God's call to Abram carried the promises of a great nation, a blessing, and a great name. It also anticipated that he would be a blessing, would receive protection from enemies, and become a link to God's ultimate blessing upon all peoples of the earth. In the course of time, however, Abraham's descendants would suffer four hundred years of bondage in a foreign land (Egypt). When the wickedness of the Amorites, who possessed Canaan, had come to full measure, God placed Abraham's descendants (Israel) there. He identified the limits of the land as the River of Egypt to the River Euphrates. When Abraham was ninety-nine, God gave him the rite of circumcision as a sign of the covenant between the two.

The land given Israel during the days of Joshua was a blessing. It is described as a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey (Exod. 3:8). It was a land of abundance (Num. 13:27; Deut. 6:3; 11:9). Israel came to enjoy grapes from vines they had not cultivated. When living faithfully, she enjoyed rest and peace and freedom from harassment by enemies. Occupancy brought an end to desert wandering. Once in the land, Israel enjoyed numerous festivals to celebrate God's goodness.

The big question is, Did God give the land of Canaan to Israel as a "loan," with the right of occupancy conditioned on Israel's faithfulness? Or, did he give Israel perpetual and exclusive right to the land, without regard to Israel's faith? Many Jews and many Christians feel the latter is the case. Although Jews did not have exclusive right to rule the land between 64 B.C.E. and 1948 C.E., occupancy of the land by the contemporary nation of Israel is reckoned by many as a divine right. Christians who hold to a return of Jesus to earth and the establishment of a millennial reign from Jerusalem, feel kindly toward Jews and Christians have different perspectives about God and what he intends to do in the future, but they find compatibility on this point. Christian millennialists may expect wholesale conversion of Jews to Jesus; contemporary Jews have no such intention.

Even from an Old Testament perspective, Israel's occupancy of the land was conditional upon their faithfulness. Whenever Israel forgot God, he allowed their enemies to encroach. He sent numerous prophets to warn them of displacement if they continued in faithlessness. Indeed, leading citizens of Israel were exiled and their land taken by Assyria in 722 B.C.E. Then, the Babylonians did the same to Judah in 586 B.C.E. The Babylonians even destroyed the temple. Thinking that Yahweh would never forsake his temple, Ezekiel demonstrates that God could and would remove his glory from the temple (Ezekiel 10). Even when God stirred the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, to allow Jews to return to Palestine, the territory

remained under the control of Persia. From Persia's hand, the land passed to the Greeks. Only with the Maccabean revolt (168 B.C.E.) did Israel exert independence, an independence they lost when their political in-fighting prompted the Romans to move in. It appears clear from the New Testament (John 4:21-24) that God's intention for a spiritual kingdom removed the territory of Israel from being an important part of the spiritual blessings made available in Jesus Christ. His is a spiritual kingdom; God rules in human hearts. Even God's initial promise to Abram (Genesis 12) looks forward to a blessing for all mankind that transcends physical property. In sum, there were two overarching promises in the Old Testament: the land and the people. A spiritual kingdom magnificently fulfills the land promise, while the church as the body of Christ fulfills the people promise as it includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Activity

Read the following passages:

1. Psalm 2 and Heb. 1:5.
2. Psa. 110:1 and Acts 2:34-35
3. Ezekiel 10
4. Joel 2:28-32 and Acts 2:14-21.
5. Micah 5:2 and Matt. 2:6
6. Hosea 11:1-2 and Matt. 2:14-15
7. Isa. 40:3-5 and Luke 3:4-6
8. Zech. 9:9 and John 12:12-15
9. Hebrews 1-7

Internet Sources

["Doctrine of the Atonement,"](#) New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia

["The Resurrection in the Acts of the Apostles"](#) by I. Howard Marshall

Textbook Reading

Erickson, chaps. 35-38. The discussion focuses on the atonement.

c. The Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God was active prior to the New Testament era. Genesis opens with a statement about the Spirit at the time of creation. The Spirit also acted in ways that indicate God was at

work in the lives of some Old Testament characters. But nowhere in the Bible is the Holy Spirit "explained." It has been left for those who do theology to assimilate the many and varied passages that relate to the Spirit and attempt to "explain" the phenomenon. While the Spirit is noted in the Old Testament, it is in the New Testament that the Spirit's activity is accented. An important question to keep in mind is, To what extent does the Spirit do the same things today as in the 1st century?

Although not as prominent in the Old Testament as in the New, God's Spirit was at work in the world. Whether the term is from the Old Testament (*ruach*) or the New (*pneuma*), the root of "spirit" signifies air, breath, or wind. In prophecy specifically, the revelation of God entails specific messages, which the Spirit inspired.

The direct connection between the Holy Spirit and the redeemed person is a New Testament subject. The Spirit is a vital part of the God's revelation and spiritual life. Interestingly, in early post-apostolic history, relatively little was said about the Holy Spirit. By the late second century, there was a growing emphasis on the divinity of the Holy Spirit. For the past century, renewed interest in the Spirit's working has come through Pentecostalism.

In the early days of the church, discussion about the Holy Spirit tended to center around the Spirit's relationship to God, the Father and Jesus Christ, the son. The word "trinity" began to be employed to represent the relationship and, at the same time, describe the nature of the Spirit. In more modern times, interest has been rekindled in the Spirit's work among believers. Recent discussion has assumed the trinitarian view of the past but has heightened the believer's awareness of the role for the Spirit in the believer.

The Gospels present the Holy Spirit in conjunction with a variety of activities. The title of the book of Acts can be stated in expanded fashion as "The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles." As Acts opens, a new era is dawning. A visible and audible demonstration of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on Pentecost marks the occasion. The apostles speak under the Spirit's direction. They interpret Old Testament passages. They perform miracles. In the early days of the church, the Spirit assists Christians in teaching. Believers make determinations in association with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit directs the mission to the Gentiles. In the Epistles and Apocalypse, the Holy Spirit may be seen in connection with apostolic revelation and gifts, personal indwelling, and the future activity of God. The majority of the references to the Spirit in the epistles are found in Paul. The discussion centers in the work of proclamation, the Spirit in the individual, and the Spirit in the corporate life of the church.

The Spirit stands in close conjunction with God. Sometimes the Spirit is personified and stands in relation

to God much like Jesus does. Jesus possessed the Spirit "without measure" and told his disciples he was returning to the Father, who would send the Spirit to be their counselor. Believers receive the Holy Spirit because they are children of God. One thing is clear: the work of the Spirit is a vital part of the activity of God and becomes an "extension" of God himself.

The Holy Spirit occupies an important role in both the work of God and the life of the Christian. He is important for his relationship with God, his role in revealing the story of redemption, and his role with the individual believer. God has given the Spirit as a "guarantee" or "earnest" of salvation (Eph. 1:13-14). The believer becomes conformed to a life that is appropriate to a relationship with God. His life becomes transformed. He is infused with a new Spirit, and the choices he makes are determined in a different manner. It is by the Spirit that one is sanctified, that is, set apart for God's service.

The fruit of the Spirit's work in a Christian is observable through attitudes and actions. The Spirit dwells within the Christian and the evidence of the Spirit's presence is manifest in the Christian's life. The life the Christian is called to lead is one that brings glory to God. It is a different style of life than the one lived in the non-redeemed state. It is one that is free from bitterness and self-centeredness. It is pleasant and unselfish.

The Holy Spirit and salvation. If human redemption involves God, who is a spiritual being, it should be no surprise to find references to spiritual forces and personalities connected to the redeemed.

References to the Spirit of God may be found in the Old Testament, but the direct connection between the Holy Spirit and the redeemed person is a New Testament subject. The Spirit is a vital part of God's revelation and spiritual life. The discussion deals with the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

Salvation is the general word that describes the action of God on behalf of a condemned sinner. In the Old Testament, salvation is generally associated with victory from an enemy or more physical type of deliverance. In the New Testament, the work is commonly connected with relief from the condemnation which sin brings.

Principal foci of the study of salvation are sanctification, perseverance, and glorification. All of these are essentially acts of God or his Spirit, but human faithfulness plays a role. Without man's willingness and desire to allow God to work in his life, there can be no spirituality.

Activity

Read the following passages and write a one-page essay on the Holy Spirit.

John 14-16
Acts 2:38
Rom. 8:26-27
1 Cor. 2:6-15
1 Corinthians 12-14
Gal. 4:4-6; 5:22-25
Eph. 1:13-14

Internet Sources

"[Holy Ghost](#)," New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia
"[The Holy Spirit as a Person in God and a Presence within You](#)," Spirithome.com

Textbook Reading

Erickson, chaps. 39-41.

MODULE 3 Salvation, the Church, and Last Things

We have entertained the quest of biblical theology (Module 1). We have explored the major subjects of biblical theology: God, man, Christ, and the Spirit of God (Module 2). What remains in our study is a treatment of major topics that relate to the God-man drama (Module 3). Themes yet to be considered include the nature and implications of the redemptive act of God (Unit 1), the nature of the kingdom of God (Unit 2), and ultimate concerns related to life beyond death and the consummation of the earth's history (Unit 3).

Salvation is the encompassing word that describes the action of God on those whose lives are in peril. In the Old Testament, salvation is generally associated with victory from an enemy or physical type of deliverance. In the New Testament, the word is more commonly connected with relief from condemnation

imposed by sin.

The Old Testament concentrates on a community of faith called by God and bound to him by covenant--Israel. The New Testament focuses on a spiritual community comprised of all nations and races. These were all "sinners" who are redeemed through the blood of Jesus Christ. God incorporated these into a single community. That community is commonly known as the *church*, the body of Christ. In this body, God nourishes his people and keeps them in anticipation of sharing his eternal abode. The church, in the context of God's sovereign reign over his redeemed people, becomes God's spiritual kingdom. Godlike attitudes and conduct distinguish those who belong to the kingdom of God from those who do not.

The kingdom of God transcends space and time, as life continues after death. The world order will itself eventually come to an end. Judgment will be executed, Satan will be banished, and eternal placement of believers and unbelievers will be assigned. These actions belong to the end times and constitute the *last things*.

The items discussed in this unit set the church apart from other religious institutions. No other religious community projects an eschatology founded on the saving work of a divine figure (Christ) sent from God. No other envisions the final defeat of evil forces and restoration of sinful man to the presence of God as does the Bible.

Consequently, the modern church must look deeply into both testaments. While realizing that Old Testament laws pertaining to animal sacrifice and regulations pertaining to conduct are no longer applicable, the use of stories, wisdom, and the psalms can be utilized to nurture believers. The most potent use of the Old Testament will be to help the church understand the nature of God and his work toward human redemption.

Exploiting the Old Testament to speculate about the future will prove futile. It should be read with the culmination of God's eternal plan in mind. It is in the New Testament that the full divine design becomes known. That design included the offer of salvation to all mankind, the church or kingdom of God where all people live under God's spiritual reign, and the consummation of faith with eternal life with our Maker.

Unit 1. Salvation

In Old Testament parlance, salvation is often associated with deliverance from some critical circumstance. In this vein, God called Israel as an extended family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He

"saved" (delivered) Israel from slavery to become a people who would declare his glory and prepare the way for redemption available to all people. While neither personal nor communal salvation appear as topics of precise discussion, the whole system of sacrifice and holy living presupposes the idea in an ongoing sense. It is true that little is said about an afterlife. When life beyond is mentioned, it is usually in morbid terms. Nevertheless, the Hebrew Scriptures anticipated a brighter view.

The Law of Moses offers the foundation on which life functioned in Israel. Wisdom literature demonstrated how the law is lived out in daily life. The land of Canaan became a tangible sign to Israel of God's blessing.

God's act in Jesus Christ offers redemption not possible through animal sacrifices and observance of the Law of Moses. This redemptive act makes true sanctification possible. Sanctification is a work of God that prepares one for present and eternal salvation.

Consequently, in the New Testament, salvation is normally affixed to spiritual redemption. God calls mankind to spiritual rebirth through the gospel of Jesus Christ. When one is born anew through immersion into the death of Christ, one is raised to live in a new way, with Christ-like attitudes and behavior befitting a new relationship with God.

God's own holiness becomes the basis for ethical behavior, just as surely as it did for ancient Israel. The famous theme of Leviticus, "You shall be holy, for I am holy," is echoed in the New Testament, where holiness is now possible through the work of Christ. Christians do not earn their salvation through their own goodness. Because they have been made new, Christians are counted as righteous by God. Consequently, they identify with both the character and will of God.

Two significant questions are raised with respect to salvation. What is the role of law? And, How are ethics, both personal and social, defined?

There is hardly a more significant topic than the place of law in both redemption and Christian living. It is here that Christianity begins to differ with other religions. In Christ, justification comes not by keeping law, but by the gracious act of God. Yet, the Christian demonstrates loyalty to God by keeping the commands of God. The commands in the New Testament do not simply replace those of the Law of Moses, because redemption is not attained through law, but through the grace of God. God's present commands are not the basis, but the instrument of saving faith. The New Testament makes it clear that the standard for right doing resides in the nature and will of God. Topics included in this deal with meaning, means, and assurance of salvation.

a. The meaning of salvation. Salvation is necessary due to the presence of sin. Sin is any action or motive that is in opposition to God. Sin is failure to acknowledge God properly. It is placing something or someone in God's rightful place of supremacy. Sin is more serious than simple forgetfulness to do the will of God.

In the contemporary setting, "salvation" is usually taken to imply heaven. Certainly, from a New Testament perspective, heaven is the final reality and "salvation" from sins through Jesus Christ is necessary to escape hell. However, from an Old Testament perspective, the theme "salvation" carries a wider and somewhat different meaning. It is the theme of "deliverance" that catches our attention. For Israel, God "saves" by delivering her from calamity; he rescues her from evil. He "blesses" her through continually sustaining her life and ensuring her well-being. This is not to remove the idea of individual salvation from the Old Testament. It is to denote that the operation of the covenant pertains to Israel as a whole. Israel has become a chosen people with a mission—not a people guaranteed personal or corporate salvation.

When Yahweh revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush in Sinai, Moses reluctantly returned to Egypt to secure Israel's release from Pharaoh (Exodus 3-4). Having met with rebuff, Moses asked, "O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all" (Exod. 5:22-23). Yahweh responded, "I am Yahweh..... I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan..... , I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant I am Yahweh and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am Yahweh your God" (Exod. 6:2-7).

When Israel was delivered from Egypt, the people praised Yahweh for his deeds. The "Song of Moses" and the "Song of Miriam" (Exod. 15:1-21) celebrate the event as Yahweh is pictured as the warrior who triumphed over Pharaoh's army. Israel's proper response to Yahweh for his act of salvation was praise and loyalty. But this sign of loyalty quickly turned to complaint and rebellion in the wilderness. Their faithless stance grew so strong that the generation was denied entrance into the land God had sworn to give the descendants of Abraham. God could wait on the next generation.

The salvation theme is not devoid of personal action, for it is connected with sacrifices. This was a means by which God was to be approached. God was worshiped by sacrifice from the earliest times--by Cain and Abel, by Noah, and by Abraham. It is not surprising that when the covenant was made with Israel at

Sinai, that sacrifice was part of it. Through sacrifice, man approached God for a number of reasons. The principle reason may have been in view of the forgiveness of sins, but Leviticus makes it clear that sacrifice was offered in thanksgiving, in fulfillment of a vow, and as a gift of free will.

Specific sacrifices included the burnt offering, which was totally consumed; the grain offering, which usually accompanied another offering; the fellowship offering, which is otherwise known as a "peace" offering; the sin offering; and the guilt offering, which required restitution to the injured person.

Once Israel entered Canaan, the people began their routines as a settled people. As time passed, a generation of people forgot Yahweh and became disloyal to him. They became indifferent to their responsibilities. They cheated one another, stole their neighbor's land, worshiped idols, and engaged in a host of other unholy acts. As a result, Yahweh allowed enemies to encroach upon their land, trample and take their produce, and harass them. Under oppression, Israel cried to God and he would raise up a "savior." In all probability, the savior (commonly known as a judge) was both a deliverer of Israel from her enemies (an army general) and a judge. As a leader of the people, it would be natural for him to settle disputes.

When Israel sinned, prophets were sent by Yahweh to recall his people. Prophets were called upon to surrender their own comforts and carry out their missions in unique ways. One such prophet was Hosea. Told by God to marry a woman of unfaithfulness and name his three children Jezreel, Not Loved, and Not My People, Hosea's family became a living message. The prophet and his family symbolized Israel's unfaithfulness and God's unending love for her, his bride.

Because Israel expected Yahweh would come to her rescue whenever she was oppressed by her enemies, she expected the Day of Yahweh (Day of the Lord) to be a day of salvation, a day of blessing, a day of rejoicing over the downfall of her enemies. However, Israel's attitude would bring the opposite effect. Yahweh set a bitter day for Israel due to several circumstances. Israel believed she was Yahweh's chosen bride and that behavior made no difference. She took Yahweh's love for granted. She was disloyal to her covenant with Yahweh. The Day of Yahweh would be a day of judgment, when Yahweh would punish Israel for her sins.

With this background, the New Testament begins with the birth of another type of "savior," one who would deliver people from the bondage of sin. Covenant and animal sacrifices notwithstanding, a new covenant and better sacrifice were needed. A new covenant had been predicted (Jer. 31:31-34). Under this covenant, God's people would "know" him and sins would be remitted (Heb. 8-10).

Conjoined with the idea of salvation are terms like justification, redemption, and sanctification. For one to be pronounced "just," God would have to make that declaration. The redeeming of mankind would require the death of a sacrificial lamb superior to man himself. To make one "holy," God's Spirit would be needed.

Activity

1. Review Lev. 1:1-6:7.
2. Review Judges 4, 6-8.
3. Look carefully at the opening of Hosea and Hos. 2:14-23.
4. Review Joel; Amos 5:18-27; Zeph. 1:14-18).
5. God is a refuge. He is my strength. So why fear? This earth is insecure. Nations and businesses fail. People disappoint and let you down. Only God is ever dependable. Pause and know that he is God! Read Psalm 46.
6. What is this new covenant and how will it differ from the Sinai covenant? What does Israel's history reveal as to the reason why a new covenant is needed? Study these passages closely: Jer. 31:31-34; Hebrews 8-10.

Internet Sources

"[Sanctification--Set Apart](#)," All about Following Jesus

Textbook Reading

Read Erickson, chap. 42. Erickson examines the conceptions and beginning of salvation.

b. The means of salvation. The basic commitment of the prophetic voice was to the covenant of Sinai. But a prominent theme of the prophets' message was the denunciation of sin among the people. When the prophets spoke of future events, it was in the context of Israel's faithlessness and God's faithfulness to the covenant. The prophets were often critical of the priesthood and the monarchy for failing to lead Israel in holiness. Israel could not trust their institutions to save them. But they could trust in Yahweh, who controls the future. That future promised both judgment and salvation.

The failure of Israel to rally around Jesus revealed they were looking for a restored Israel without interference by foreign powers. That hope was nourished during the time between the testaments. When he came, with an announcement of repentance and a spiritual kingdom, Jesus did not fit the expectation. The Old Testament is clear enough on what defined righteousness, but the Pharisees simply did not make the connection for the community of Israel during the days of Jesus.

Salvation involves commitment to a relationship with God through a divinely instituted covenant. The covenants with Noah, Abraham, and David, and the covenant at Sinai point toward the activity of Jesus. These covenants were upheld by a God who is always faithful, because he swears by himself. All of these anticipated a new covenant, by which sins would be forgiven.

Man is not in charge of his own destiny. He is powerless to find God through introspection, mediation, good deeds, or wishful thinking. Not even observing laws from God can save a person. One dilemma is that one inevitably sins. And when this occurs, the only means of forgiveness and restoration is an act of God. When man forfeits holiness, he is unable to regain it. God must reconstitute it on his own terms. If God were to accept man's ability to become holy, then man would possess qualities which are distinctively divine. God's answer is to provide a means by which man can become righteous separate from human initiative. That means is through the blood of Jesus Christ.

When the apostle Peter said, "there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12), he was describing the *means* by which God justifies a person, that is when God counts the individual as one who has legal standing before God.

God's act was performed in behalf of every person alive--past, present, and future. But providing the *means* of salvation (spiritual deliverance from the condemnation brought about by sin), does not equate with having salvation. There is a role for the individual person. Each must take advantage of the opportunity or it will pass one by. God summons one to faith, but he does not compel one to have faith. He announces salvation's offer through the gospel. Faith can come when one hears the gospel and responds to its demands. Those demands include belief in Jesus as the Son of God, through whom redemption is made possible. It also demands repentance of the sinner and baptism into Christ. Further, the gospel demands a life lived in conformity with the will of God. It is important to appreciate the difference between God's provision and man's response. It is also essential to distinguish man's initiative to obtain righteousness and his loving response to a caring God.

Millard Erickson identifies three historical positions taken on baptism: baptismal regeneration, a sign and seal of the covenant, and a token of salvation (*Christian Theology*, 2nd ed., pp. 1099-1106). While these positions represent historic Christianity, consider that the biblical text supports an alternative to all three.

The biblical text is much akin to the first position, but it does not speak in terms of sacraments and baptismal regeneration. Through baptism one passes from the old life to the new, being united with Christ in his death, where one symbolically makes contact with his saving blood. In this sense, baptism is for the remission of sins. There is no magic here; baptism is an act, a process connected with belief in Christ as the Son of God, with one's repentance, with the entering a spiritual relationship with God, and with the receipt of the Holy Spirit. Truth is found in all historic positions, but none of them capture the whole concept of biblical baptism--immersion of believers in water. The sacramental view of baptism, which holds that a person is united with Christ once and for all by baptism, fails to take into account the New Testament warnings against apostasy.

In a manner like that of the Spirit's baptism, water baptism picturesquely re-enacts what the Spirit has done. The new believer is "immersed" (baptized) in water to signify he or she has died in reference to their old life, and has been "buried" because the old way of life is over. The new believer is then raised "to walk in newness of life." This means he lives as the Risen Christ lives - by a life that honors the Father in one's faith day by day. Since this dying and raising was the singular act that made a person a follower of Christ, water baptism follows immediately as the first act of obedience by a new believer. Water baptism then serves as a re-enactment, or "picture," of this baptism by the Spirit. Water baptism is not the saving act of faith, but it is a physical representation of the saving act that was accomplished spiritually by the Spirit of Christ.

Activity

Study the following passages closely:

Matt. 28:19-20

Acts 2:38

Rom. 3:21-31

Romans 5-6

Phil. 3:7-11; 4:4-8

Col. 2:9-23

2 Thess. 2:13-17

Internet Source

"[Holiness](#)," Believe Religious Information Source

Textbook Reading

Read Erickson, chaps. 43-45. The readings discuss predestination, the means and extent of salvation, and baptism.

c. Assurance of salvation. The "assurance" of salvation means eternal salvation has been guaranteed; nothing can prohibit its delivery. It is an accomplished fact. The proposition is true according to scripture. However, one must realize that the assurance of salvation does not imply that a believer is immune to unfaithfulness and the loss of personal salvation. There is never a question as to whether God can deliver on his promises. Uncertainty lies with man's conscious decision to refuse the offer through neglect or disbelief. Biblical writers are ever warning of the delusions of Satan, the pulls of the secular order, and human carelessness. Human faithfulness to God and his commandments derives from a free and grateful response to an invitation to participate in the redemption God has provided in Christ. The central thought behind predestination in scripture is that God can and will deliver on his promises.

The work of Christ is only one part of the salvation story. Of equal importance is man's desire to take advantage of the gift of grace. If man is responding to the gospel for his own selfish benefit, he is short sighted. Ideally, he or she responds out of honor to God. True, one's sins are damning and baptism into Christ is for remission of personal sins. Through this act of faith, one is "assured" eternal salvation. But that does not mean one's faith is complete at that point. One's faith is nurtured and tested throughout one's life. Only God can perfect it; only God can sanctify a person; only God can make one righteous.

The primary requirement for receiving and retaining God's saving grace always has been faith. The election of Israel was an election for service, not one of favoritism regardless of faith or the lack thereof. Likewise, the calling to faith in Christ is not merely a call to escape punishment. In fact, the call to faith is a summons to persecution and suffering. Faith is tested and proven through trials and suffering. It is in these trials that one realizes the assurance of salvation.

The possibility of losing one's salvation is real. Most of the New Testament epistles were written in view of threats to faith. Hardly one of the epistles fails to contain warnings and exhortations built on the assumption that salvation can be lost. For example, the Christians at Galatia were on the verge of wholesale loss. Those addressed in the book of Hebrews were warned of the consequences of drifting away. Evil teachers, the cares of the world, indifference, and direct disobedience are all activities that seek to undermine the Christian's faith. Salvation from sin is a precious gift from the heart of the Savior who gave himself totally in love on the cross. It should be cherished, respected, and honored for the precious gift it is. Anything less does disservice to the love of God in Jesus Christ.

Activity

Analyze the following passages and write a one-page essay on assurance of salvation.

Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43

Rom. 8:28-39

1 Cor. 15:1-2

Gal. 1:6-9; 3:1-5; 4:8-11; 5:1-6:10

Heb. 2:1-4

Hebrews 11

1 John 1:5-2:6; 4:7-21

2 John 4-9

Revelation 2-3

Internet Sources

["The Agonizing Problem of the Assurance of Salvation"](#) by John Piper, Resource Library

["How to Be Sure"](#)

Textbook Reading

Erickson, chaps. 46-48

Unit 2. The Kingdom of God and the Church

The "kingdom of God" and the "church" are not fully synonymous. However, the terms have much in common. The kingdom of God normally refers to the people who come under the spiritual reign of God. Of course, if God is sovereign, every human being is under God's reign or domain. But theologically, the kingdom of God has special application. It encompasses those who respond to God through Jesus Christ.

The "church" is likewise God's called out people. It is constituted with those who have answered the call of the gospel and been redeemed by the blood of Christ. To this extent, kingdom and church refer to the same people. The term "church" closely delineates function. It has designated ministry roles, specific forms of worship, and a conduct code. One might say that the "kingdom of God" identifies the realm and "the church of God" defines life within that realm.

Kingdom language makes it clear that the expression takes on different nuances when the present, the immediate future, and the distant future come into play. Because many topics and themes are interrelated, it is difficult to isolate any one of them. The saving work of Christ is related to the reign of God. Likewise, the mission of Christ cannot be divorced from the kingdom and salvation. Describing theology is much like trying to describe the various branches of science. Scientific disciplines overlap, because they are interdependent. Isolating one branch for specialized study is helpful but, the various branches merely represent segments of the natural order. And so it is with theology. The isolation of one topic has little meaning unless it can be observed in relation to the whole divine order.

Sadly, the concept of the church as a divinely instituted body of believers has been subject to reinterpretation throughout history. By the Middle Ages, the church had become tied closely with the secular culture and political power. It was no longer the community of Christ one observes from reading the New Testament. In the West, the 16th century Protestant Reformation attempted to make corrections to the church's structure and function. In the process, other issues were raised--what constituted church membership, how to account for the multiplication of denominations, the manner in which the Bible could serve as an authority for faith and action, and how to shape a theology of salvation.

This unit identifies three sub-topics: (a) the kingdom and the church, (b) structural and functional matters, and (c) unity, piety, and worship. The first task is to establish the distinctive features of the church and kingdom. The second is to discover the way various aspects of the church fit together. The third task is to analyze life within the kingdom.

a. The kingdom and the church

The kingdom of God. The idea of a “kingdom of God” is present throughout the Bible. Israel was chosen by God to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exod. 19:5-6). The act recognized a distinction between God’s claim to all peoples and his special recognition of Israel. The choice of Israel had a special purpose: to create a witness to the world and to become an instrument through whom God would bless all people. Constituting Israel as a kingdom went beyond the idea of a territorial dominion over which a king had established his sovereignty by force. Though kings commonly bound their newly conquered people by covenant and exacted tribute from them, God bound himself with Israel in benevolent fashion through a covenant that was primarily spiritual in nature. In the Mosaic legislation, provision was made for a human king to rule over Israel, but not without divine approval (Deut. 17:14-20). The king was to safeguard against compromising positions and give full attention to governing “God’s” people. The first king came as a result of a rebellious spirit, so Yahweh rewarded the people with a king who did not seek God first (1 Samuel 8). Then, God placed on the throne a “man after his own heart,” that is, one who would rule the people as though they were God’s, not his own. This idealized situation is presented in

graphic form in Psalm 2.

The idea of God's reign is a persistent theme throughout the Old Testament. But there is a new aspect that appears. That is the aspect of a future act of God that would have its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Not only did Yahweh forecast a new covenant (Jeremiah 31), but he foreshadowed the coming of the reign of God in a much more dramatic and inclusive manner. In Daniel's interpretation of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, God promised to establish an eternal kingdom that would overcome the world's great empires (Dan. 2:44). Before Jesus began his earthly ministry, John the baptizer entered the scene preaching, "The time has come, . . . The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news" (Mark 1:14-15). Jesus launched his ministry preaching the good news of the kingdom (Matt. 4:23) and taught his disciples to pray for God's kingdom to come (Matt. 6:10). The attendant message in the synagogue in Nazareth met immediate rejection when he pointed to himself as the fulfillment of the kingdom message (Luke 4:14-30).

Just prior to his ascension, Jesus continued to teach his apostles about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). Throughout Acts, both the church and the kingdom are proclaimed. By definition, the church is the "called out." It is the body of Christ, those who have been reconciled to God through being washed symbolically at baptism in the blood of Christ.

It is easy to conflate teaching about the kingdom and activities of the first century church. Not that this is wholly inaccurate, but it does take attention away from the substance of the kingdom of God and replace it in people's minds with a body that is often too closely associated with the secular world. The kingdom *per se* is a spiritual realm. Its concerns are with spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:10-18). As the book of Revelation emphasizes, the kingdom of God is yet coming into its own. Eventually, the kingdom of God will swallow up the kingdoms of men. This eventuality is not to be found in a physical kingdom on earth, but in reality when Satan has been forever banished.

One should be cautious of attempts to interpret passages relative to the kingdom of God to yet future events and to find fulfillment of the kingdom in a thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. The idea is an old one and poses serious problems. First, all the Old Testament passages which point to the culminating redemptive event in the cross must be reinterpreted to allow failure on the part of God and Christ since the cross represented a rejection of the king. Second, the sense of fulfillment of the Law of Moses in Christ and the cross must be reinterpreted to allow some reinstatement of an inadequate law. Third, passages used to support an earthly kingdom with a physically present king in Jerusalem misinterpret Revelation 20 and ignore 1 Thess. 4:13-17.

One of the hotly debated topics in Christian circles is whether God indeed established the kingdom of his intent when Jesus was on earth. The postulation that God was thwarted in his plan and substituted the church does not reflect the biblical view. Neither does it do justice to the person of God. The biblical view of the kingdom is best understood as having several applications. But one of these applications is not a future earthly kingdom in which Jesus will physically reign from Jerusalem in a restored Jewish state.

The church. The New Testament presents the church as a predetermined entity from the "inception" of God's plan for human redemption. It coincides roughly with the kingdom of God, although there are nuances that keep it from being identical at all points.

The word "church" is derived from the Greek language (*ekklesia*) and signifies an assembly, a called out group. The church is a community of believers who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Having been baptized into the death of Christ and raised to a new kind of life, these believers are constituted part of the body of their Savior. Christ is the head of this body and represents it before God. Christians become parts of one another and are expected to live in unity. Even though Christians may reside all over the world, they belong to the one body of Christ. They may assemble and interact in local assemblies or congregations for fellowship and encouragement. When this happens, they are overseen by shepherds who watch over their well-being.

Activity

Research and then write a one-page essay in which you differentiate the idea of the kingdom from the concept of the church. Consider carefully the following passages:

Daniel 2. What are God's intentions? What is the nature of the "kingdom of God"? Ascertaining the answers to these two questions will be the key to understanding the New Testament, especially the references to the kingdom of God.

Matthew 13

Matt. 16:13-28

1 Corinthians 1-3

Ephesians 1-3

Colossians 1

Internet Sources

"The Meaning of Church," by Paul Hazelden

"The Meaning and Significance of the Phrase 'Kingdom of God' in the Teaching of Jesus as Represented by the Synoptic Gospels"

by Robert L. Bradshaw, Bible Studies.org.uk

Textbook Reading

Erickson, chaps. 49-53

b. Structural and functional matters. The New Testament presents the church as a predetermined entity from the "inception" of God's plan for human redemption. It coincides roughly with the kingdom of God, although there are nuances that keep it from being identical at all points. This section deals with the government of the church.

When speaking of the kingdom of God or the kingdom of Christ, we are speaking of an absolute monarchy, to put it in human terms. Christ is king and all humans are royal subjects. The king's will is supreme; the king's subjects are expected to demonstrate their loyalty through executing the king's will. The king's will is understood to be expressed in biblical scripture. There is no notion of little fiefdoms or an earthly representative. Christ and his subjects all serve under the sovereignty of God.

As for the church, it too has an absolute head. Christ is the head of the church, as well as the savior of the body. The imagery of the human body is used by Paul to describe the relation of individual members of the church to Christ. The imagery describes the relation of individual members to each other. Individual Christians may have different functions as do members of a human body, but no member commands supremacy over another (1 Cor. 12:12-14). Paul also compares the relation between Christ and the church with that of a husband and wife (Eph. 5:22-33).

None of the passages cited above address the subject of human governance. This matter receives attention in two contexts. One context relates to a general display of ministries performed by believers. The second context relates to local church functions.

As for ministries in general, Paul enumerates the ministries found within the first century church. The most specific statement is found in Eph. 4:11-16. Not only does he enumerate diverse forms of ministry, he gives the overall goal. The ministries include apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The goal is their service to mature a local church in Christ. There is no hierarchy mentioned, although the apostles would have occupied the most commanding position. Other passages speak of deacons (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-13).

The second context has to do with local congregational functions. Wherever Paul went on his evangelistic mission, he appointed elders to shepherd local churches. Several terms are employed to describe the function of this group of men. They are called "elders," for they were mature and wise. They are called "pastors" or "shepherds," for their task was to feed and protect young and immature believers. They were called "bishops," because they were overseers of the spiritual flock. In no instance is a hierarchy implied among this group and in no instance was a local church overseen by a single individual. The elders would have been "over" the flock in terms of responsibility only. The stress is on service and goal, not on control.

Christian groups may agree that the Lord's Supper is vital to the life of the church, but they disagree over the frequency of observance. And despite considerable agreement about the desirability of unity, there is little agreement about the form it should take.

Activity

Read the following passages and develop a chart that shows the relationship of the various ministries found in the church.

Acts 14:21-23

1 Cor. 12:12-31

Eph. 4:11-16; 5:22-23

Phil. 1:1

1 Timothy 3

Titus 1

Internet Sources

"[Elders & Deacons](#)," by Andreas Kostenberger, Biblical Foundations

c. Unity, piety, and worship

Worship and piety. When God called Israel into covenant relationship, he had reason to expect behavior that would honor him. Man's response would be in the form of both ritual and conduct. God defined each of these. Ritual took the form of sacrifice, festivals, and circumcision. The expectant life was defined in terms of attitudes and actions toward one's fellows.

God is known through worship, i.e., the “cult.” Cult refers to those forms and acts ritually performed in a worship setting where people deal with deity. For Israel, the “cult” embraced public prayer, sacrifice, song, and ritual structures such as tabernacles, temples, and priests (Elmer A. Martens, *God’s Design*, p. 91; note Exod. 29:44-45). Worship involved form, sacred places, sacred times, and sacred acts. Coincidental to worship were the character of piety and its expression—devotion, reverence, and affection. Though cult institutions have been modified due to the sacrifice of Christ, Christian worship includes acts of worship, spiritual character, and service.

Moral standards are derived from God and are passed to man for his well-being. But ethics are not a means by which one attains holiness. Rather, one’s ethical behavior becomes a means by which one reflects the holiness of God. Since God is the source of righteousness, it is only natural that he should reveal to man how to conduct his affairs on earth.

What may be taken for granted by a modern person is not necessarily the way it was in the first century. Two millennia of history and interpretation tend to cloud the vision. The task is to cut through the collection of cultural trappings and debates in order to discover the essence of the church as presented in the New Testament. Additionally, the extent to which current culture conditions the modern student’s thinking will continue to be a challenge.

A portrait of the church. If the gospel represents God’s initiative in the world, how should those who respond to the gospel represent him? What kind of fellowship do they comprise? How does this fellowship function? These are questions that will await further elaboration in other courses, but a few observations should be made.

Jesus Christ enables spiritual victory to those who respond to his call to faithful allegiance. If the gospel is to have universal appeal, it should carry with it the assurance of victory even when opposed by the strongest of forces. The disciples of Jesus become a victorious army as they battle the influence and power of Satan.

The church in the world. Jesus taught that the kingdom of God exists in the world and that Satan’s efforts to defeat it are present. Two questions face the disciples. One is, What should be our relationship with the world? The second is, How should we respond to the world? Christians should measure their relationship with the secular environment carefully. They know that, on one hand, they must live in the world. On the other hand, they are called by Jesus to holiness and proclamation within that world.

The church is a community that reflects the love of God. God has chosen to constitute the saved as a community, commonly known as the "church," the body of Christ. The Word that became flesh continues to create and nurture people of faith in his likeness. Christians relate to Jesus Christ as a body connected with its head (Eph. 1:22-23). Through common worship and activity, the saints strengthen each other and reach out in Jesus' name to their friends, neighbors, and spiritual enemies. In this body, God nourishes his people and keeps them in anticipation of having them share his eternal abode.

Activity

Study the following passages:

John 17. What are the implications of Jesus' prayer for unity among believers?

1 Cor. 1:10-17; 3:1-22; 10:14-33; 11:17-34

Jas. 2:1-7; 4:1-3

Study questions. What kind of portrait of the church did you get from the Gospels? Do the Gospels address church organization or specific worship activity such as prayer, singing, and the Lord's supper? What do the Gospels say about the kind of behavior one should manifest if he comes under the reign of God? What ways are the "church" and the "kingdom" the same? How are they different? What are some of the images that describe the church? What is the significance of each? Given the nature of the Scriptures, what forms of organization are intended for the modern church? How should a local church be "organized" so as to function properly? How and when should the Lord's supper be partaken by local Christians? What is the relation between baptism and inclusion into the body of Christ?

Internet Sources

"[Last Supper, Lord's Supper](#)," Believe Religious Information Source

"[Prayer in the New Testament](#)" by Robert Hill, bible.org

Unit 3. Last Things

The final unit pertains to topics that relate to the end of the world and beyond. These matters belong to

the discipline of eschatology. Derived from the Greek word *eschaton*, eschatology designates a study of the end times or last things.

As for the end times, the issues tend to fall into two areas. The first issue is expressed by two questions. When will Jesus return? and What will be the nature of his activity when he does return? The second issue revolves around the reality of judgment, heaven, and hell.

The simple New Testament statements regarding Jesus' return have given way to much speculation. Through most of Christian history, the absence of a belief in a literal millennium (amillennialism) has prevailed. Energized by apocalyptic material from both the Old and New Testaments, moderns have developed elaborate schemes to lay out a complex sequence of events. Included within the projections is a physical kingdom on earth that has Jesus reigning for 1,000 years in Jerusalem. Although there are traces of millennialism before the 18th century, the interest in the conversion of the Jews and a thousand-year reign of Jesus as king of a kingdom of earth has captured the imagination of millions.

End time topics are much more pronounced in the New Testament than in the Old. The Old Testament is silent regarding the second coming of Christ, for its messianic interests focus on the initial appearance of the Messiah. The kingdom of God, like the Messiah, is a future event, not an end-of-the-world entity.

This unit addresses the coming of Jesus Christ, concepts of the final judgment, heaven, and hell. The topics are associated, for the return of Christ leads to the final judgment of mankind. At the judgment, all of those who have ever lived on the earth will be sentenced by God and assigned to a proper eternal abode--heaven or hell.

The subject of the future is always intriguing. The New Testament does address the subject, but not as specifically as some would like. One must be careful in examining passages related to the future. The purpose of such passages is more for the purpose of keeping believers ready than for answering people's curiosity.

a. The Second coming of Christ. Christians always live in expectation of the end of the world, when Christ shall appear in the sky to receive his own. As Jesus ascended to heaven following forty days after his resurrection, angels announced that he would return. The early church nurtured this promise. The apostle Paul spoke of the *parousia* (appearing, presence) of Jesus. Established firmly in the early Christians' mind was the idea that Jesus would appear and this appearing would mark the end of the world. In Corinth, some became anxious over the failure of Jesus to return during the lifetime of fellow believers who had died. Paul set these anxious hearts at ease by assuring them that those who remained alive at Jesus' appearing would not precede those who died. Together, they would ascend to meet Jesus



in the air and enjoy eternity with him. There is no hint that the early disciples anticipated a physical reign of Christ following his ascension.

The book of Revelation (the Apocalypse) has been the subject of diverse interpretations. In modern times, four main approaches have been identified. The "preterist" approach places interpretation of the major events within the first few centuries after the book was written. The "historical" approach assumes that the book can be earmarked with events that have been happening since the days of the apostle John. The "futurist" approach tends to push most of the events to the yet future. The "symbolic" approach sees principles at work in human history--principles that are repeated. Given the statements of the book, the purpose for writing, and the general situation of the church, the first of these approaches seems to fit best.

How the book is interpreted depends in large measure on the assumptions made prior to opening the book. Some understand that it supports the idea that the kingdom of God will eventually take over the world and that for 1,000 years the kingdom will dominate the world scene (a post-millennial view). More prominent is a view that Christ will return to earth and establish a physical kingdom and physically reign for 1,000 years from Jerusalem (a pre-millennial view). Still others deny either of those positions and are called a-millennialists. For the past two centuries, a "dispensational" view has attracted many. The idea is that time can be divided into "dispensations" when God worked in different ways with his creation. Inherent within this view is a premillennial approach.

Activity

1. Using your Bible, locate passages that deal with end time events and write a one-page essay summarizing your findings.
2. Analyze 1 Corinthians 15.
3. Analyze 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11.

Internet Source

["Competing Theories of Eschatology, End Times, and Millennialism"](#) by B. A. Robinson,
Religious Tolerance

Textbook Reading



Erickson, chaps. 54-55. Erickson discusses the second coming and summarizes millennial views.

b. The judgment of God. The term "judgment" is quite familiar to everyone. It is used in multiple contexts. Informally, people make judgments regarding the routine of life. In this sense, judgment suggests making wise choices. It takes a bad turn when someone accuses another of an unfounded action or thought. In a legal context, judgment is made against one when civil law is breached. The judge himself or herself is highly respected when he/she is free from bribes and makes fair application of the law. The one against whom judgment is made is sent to jail or fined.

When employed in a religious context, judgment is concerned with spiritual attitudes and conduct. Ancient Israel was required by the Law of Moses to make judgments and execute sentences upon those who broke certain laws. The church likewise is expected to pronounce judgments on occasion (1 Cor. 5:3-4). When applied with the Spirit of Christ, these judgments can bring repentance and restoration to fellowship (2 Cor. 2:5-11). If rendered inappropriately, serious consequences can result.

Judgment has been part of God's dealings with humankind from the beginning. He entered into judgment against Adam and Eve, the multitudes of Noah's day, the people at the Tower of Babel, Israel in the wilderness, and wicked nations.

The Apocalypse is filled with the idea of judgment long before it describes the "final" judgment. The major theme of the Apocalypse is the triumph of God over Satan. But the book treats the subject of judgment in an extraordinary way. Not only does God execute judgment upon Satan, he executes judgments (plural) on those evils which are inspired by him and are executed by humanity.

At a time to be decided by God, all humans will meet God at the judgment bar. Those who have lived under the spiritual reign of God will face no fear. They anticipate being in the glorious presence of God. Others, however, will be banished from God. These are consequences of the final judgment.

No one knows the time of the end of the world, so living in constant readiness for death and the coming Christ is urged. Those who die before the end, face death with the same confidence of resurrection and bliss as those who are alive when Jesus gathers his own. Meanwhile, living from day to day is done in view of the brevity of life. Only God holds the key to tomorrow. Man is held responsible for the way he lives and behaves toward others. He teaches others of the saving act of God in Christ and urges their faith, repentance, confession, and baptism.



The New Testament speaks of the end of the age, accountability, and life beyond this one. In the Old Testament, the abode of the dead is hardly a topic for discussion.

Activity

Study carefully these passages:

Rom. 2:1-16

1 Corinthians 5

2 Cor. 2:5-11; 5:1-10

Gal. 1:6-9

2 Tim. 4:1-8

1 Pet. 5:1-4

3 John 9-10

Jude

Internet Sources

"[The Final Judgment](#)" by Matthew G. Easton, WebBible Encyclopedia, Christiananswers.net

"[Some Thoughts on the Intermediate State of the Dead](#)" by Ashley L. Camp

Textbook Reading

Erickson, chap. 56. Erickson considers death, the intermediate state, resurrection, and the final judgment.

c. Final states. Man has always been aware of his appointment with destiny. He is made to be inquisitive about his own future and the future of the world. Many nurture every hint of the afterlife; others live in this world as though this is life supreme. Some live in fear of divine judgment; some are quite confident of their standing before God. Still others seem to give little thought to judgment or life after death. Even theologians differ on what the end may bring.

By "final state," we mean the state of the human person after death. The Bible speaks of two alternatives—-heaven and hell. An individual's destination depends upon the person's relationship with God in this life. God himself will make the judgment. From a biblical perspective, that judgment is based on one's conscious response to God's offer of salvation through the blood of Christ.

Heaven is described in paradisiacal terms. It is a place of restored fellowship in the presence of God. God



occupies the central place, being surrounded by both the heavenly host and those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. It will be a most wonderful place. The description in Revelation 21-22 offers a glimpse of its splendor in accommodative language.

Hell (Greek, *gehenna*) is a most undesirable place. It is the abode of Satan and his demons. It is reserved for evildoers and those who do not know God through the Lord Jesus Christ. The New Testament describes hell as a lake of fire and brimstone. Hell is as despicable as heaven is delightful.

Only a few references are made to the afterlife. In the New Testament, heaven is treated as a future life, where God and heavenly beings may be found in a secure city. Hell is represented as a place of eternal torment for unbelievers.

Activity

Doing your own research, write a one-page essay on the biblical teaching on heaven and hell.

Analyze Revelation 21-22.

Internet Sources

"[Heaven](#)," New Advent, Catholic Encyclopedia (Roman Catholic perspective)

"[The Glory of Heaven](#)," International Outreach, Inc.

"[Hell](#)," New Advent, Catholic Encyclopedia (Roman Catholic perspective)

"[Hell](#)," A True Church

Textbook Reading

Erickson, chap. 58

Conclusion

The ultimate goal of this course has been to appreciate the nature of God's involvement with the human family. We would like to say a goal has also been to comprehend the person of God, but that unadvised wish lies beyond both the capacity and the right of mankind. Hopefully, the more realistic goal has been met--at least to a substantial degree. But much more lies ahead with regard to applying biblical



theology in the contemporary world.

Assuming that it is proper to appropriate biblical teaching into a modern context only raises several basic questions. Among these are, “What applies?” and “What does not apply?” Obviously, the atonement of Christ applies and animal sacrifices do not. Other matters may be less clear. Even in matters that do apply in the present world, the question remains as to how and to what extent. For example, are 1st century forms of church governance binding on the modern church? Even more critical in the modern age is the general tendency to liberalize biblical positions on women’s roles, sexual behavior, skewed doctrine, and general indifference.

You should keep before you the meaning of scripture in its primitive context and resist unwarranted modifications. In your deliberation, observe the spirit of Christ and the gospel. Keep clear of extremes, either total libertinism or legalism.

Theology is a living discipline. Because it is the activity of humans in a quest to understand God and his activity, human perceptions change with information and with age. It is dangerous to assume that any human mind is incapable of error, that human perceptions are always correct, and that tradition is an apt interpreter of scripture. Yet, theology is essential to faith. It provides the foundation for faith and informs faith. Hence, there should be no tension between theological inquiry and a dynamic personal faith. A faith uninformed by theological investigation is likely to be dry and cold. Its tenets are likely untested and its essence unsure. If faith were built on feeling, theological inquiry would be unnecessary. But since faith comes by hearing the word of God, theological perceptions depend upon attentive study of the Scriptures. The time one dedicates to study may not guarantee solid faith, but indifference and a closed mind can hardly provide the soil that enables true faith to develop and grow.

Theology and life go together like a hand and a glove. The glove assumes full development when all fingers are firmly placed within it. A glove without the hand is lifeless, just as a faith without the contribution of theological inquiry. May you continue your quest for God, both in study and in application.

Activity Summary

Drawing from your notebook, describe a sample of the activities you were instructed to perform as you proceeded with the course. You need not name them all, but demonstrate in your report that you were conscientious about doing them. Reveal insights gained and questions raised. The summary should be



approximately 1,000 words and submitted in a Word document from the Course Menu, under Module 3. The summary is valued at 20 percent of the course grade.

Research

Now that you have completed the three examinations, you are required to develop and submit a 2,000-word research paper as a fourth graded element. In your paper, discuss a biblical doctrine and cite ten credible sources. Use formal style. APA. A tutorial on APA can be accessed from the OCU Online Library. See the [Writing Guide](#) page for the style manual and grading rubrics. You may also consider the function on Windows 10 that helps you write in formal style.

Develop the paper in a Word document and upload your final draft at the Course Menu, under Module 3.

Approved topics include

1. The Concept of God
2. The Attributes of God
3. God's Role in History
4. Satan
5. Human Responsibility
6. Covenant
7. Prophecy
8. The Person of Christ
9. The Kingdom of God
10. Divine Judgment
11. Sin
12. Redemption