

# Caribbean Graduate School of Theology

## Biblical Theology

### Lecture 2 – What is Biblical Theology?

January 2021 - Sheldon Campbell

The Bible has a total of 66 books with 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament. These books can be studied individually, but they can also be examined in the various groups, which they belong.

Here is one example of how we could classify them in groups.

#### **Old Testament Books:**

**The Pentateuch** (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) – **5 books**

**Historical Books** (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther) – **12 books**

**Poetic Books or Writings** (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Songs of Solomon) – **5 books**

**The Major Prophets** are (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel) – **5 books**

**The Minor Prophets** are (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The Minor Prophets) – **12 books**

**Total = 39 books**

#### **New Testament Books:**

**Gospels** (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) – **4 books.**

Acts – 1 book

**Thirteen Epistles of Paul** (Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon).

Hebrews

James

1 & 2 Peter

1, 2 & 3 John, Revelation

**Total = 27 books**

**Grand Total = 66 books (39 books + 27 books)**

Of note, Matthew, Mark and Luke are sometimes referred to as the Synoptic Gospels. Moreover, since Luke wrote the books of Luke and Acts, they could be classified as a group also. Biblical books can also be grouped based on their particular Genre, for instance, Apocalyptic books such as Daniel in the Old Testament and Revelation in the New Testament.

As we consider, the many ways we can approach studying the books of the Bible gives us clues as to the differing views of what Biblical Theology is and how we should conduct it.

## **The Meaning of Biblical Theology**

There are different views on biblical theology (BT).

Rosner (2001) thinks BT “is principally concerned with the overall theological message of the whole Bible”.

Smith (2013, 137) believes BT “attempts to understand the beliefs of the biblical writers on their own terms...it attempts to grasp what a biblical book, author, corpus, testament, or the entire canon taught to its original audience in their context”.

Osborne (2006, 349) defines BT as “that branch of theological inquiry concerned with tracing themes through the diverse sections of the Bible (such as the wisdom writings or the epistles of Paul) and then with seeking the unifying themes that draw the Bible together.” He also views BT “to be at the apex of the exegetical stage (discerning 'what it meant') and as providing a transition to the contextualization stage (determining 'what it means')”.

Biblical Theology “is that branch of Exegetical Theology which deals with the process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible” (Vos 1991, 5).

I believe BT may be defined as the literary, historical and thematic study of the Scripture today for believers to live for God faithfully. This approach is done by obtaining an overall understanding of a single canonical book, writer, collection of scriptural books, testament and the Bible from the authors' lens whom God inspired to pen this special revelation.

## **The Necessity of the Perspective of Biblical Theology**

Four reasons to take the historical and theological context of the Old Testament and New Testament in consideration when conducting BT (Stuhlmacher 1995, 3):

- i) As far as Jesus and the apostles are concerned, “the Holy Scriptures” do not belong to Israel alone, but to all Jews and Gentiles who believe Jesus to be Lord and Christ” (p. 3).
- ii) “Both texts clearly show that a correct Christian understanding of the person and mission of Jesus, as well as his passion and resurrection, was and is to be achieved only with the help of the testimony of the Scriptures.”(p. 3).
- iii) “The New Testament books are not placed opposite an Old Testament which had long been fixed as to its contents; rather, they refer to a collection of “Holy Scriptures” written in Hebrew and Greek which are still canonically unclosed, and they testify to a continuity of salvation history (cf. Luke 16 and Hebrew 1:1-2)” (p. 5)
- iv) “It becomes absolutely necessary to speak of only one complex canonical process from which the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint and the New Testament all emerged” (p. 5).

## **The Realization of the Perspective of Biblical Theology**

- i) Intertestamental period -> Helps to explain the division of OT & NT. Also, “one therefore does well to realize and take into consideration not only that ancient Judaism produced the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint, but also that Judaism deserves to be given special attention when studying New Testament” (p. 7).
- ii) There are many references to the OT in NT (p. 8).
- iii) Christocentricity helps us to understand both the OT & NT (pp. 9-11).