

BGM BIBLE COLLEGE

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP

Introduction to Theology

Biblical Theology of Worship—that is, *what is the Biblical Doctrine of Worship?* Before we speak concerning worship, we must first speak concerning theology. The academic definition of *theology* is: **the study of God**, comprised of two Greek words, *Theos* and *Logos*, meaning *the study of God*. Practically, theology signified *that which persuaded a man to believe something*, that which led unto faith. Theology aimed to produce belief, to implant doctrine within the heart, and to persuade one to place faith therein.

Types of Theology in the World

Within the academic world there are many kinds of theologies. Today we shall consider some of them, that ye may discern the difference between them and Biblical Theology.

1. Historical Theology

Historical Theology—*Ilm-e-Tareekh-e-Ilahiyyat*—examined how the faithful, throughout history, received and confessed doctrines. It studies how doctrines spread through the Church and in what manner believers embraced them. For example, in Early Christology there is a debate between Larry Hurtado and James Dunn concerning whether the worship of Jesus Christ began immediately after His ascension by the apostles, or whether, like the doctrine of the Trinity, it gradually developed in the third and fourth centuries. These matters are studied in Historical Theology.

2. Philosophical Theology

Philosophical Theology—*Falsafāna Ilm-e-Ilahiyyat*—seeketh to prove the existence of God through logic and reasoning rather than through the Scriptures. This form of theology is greatly employed among atheists, secularists, and communists who deny the very existence of God and raise many objections against the Bible.

3. Apologetic Theology

Apologetic Theology—*Difa'-e-Īmān*—trained men to give answer to objections against the Bible and the Christian faith. It teaches the defense of one's faith with wisdom and sound reasoning.

4. Systematic Theology

Systematic Theology—also called Dogmatic or Constructive Theology—is the most renowned branch. It dealt with *topical studies*. One topic is chosen, and all the Scripture from

Genesis to Revelation is searched to gather whatsoever the Bible teaches concerning that topic. It proceeded according to a system.

5. Practical (Applied) Theology

Practical or Applied Theology concerned itself with ministry, service, and the practical application of divine truth. It trained believers for ministry and service within the Church.

6. Biblical Theology

Lastly cometh **Biblical Theology**, the very subject of our class. Biblical Theology holdeth a unique place in academics, for it traced the progress of divine revelation from Genesis unto Revelation. By following the Scripture's own order and development, Biblical Theology revealed God's unfolding plan.

Purpose and Outcomes of This Course

Two Foundational Aims

1. Understanding and Practicing Biblical Theology

The first aim is that ye may know what Biblical Theology is and how it is practiced. Ye shall learn the principles, the laws, and the techniques whereby Biblical Theology is done. And those who participate with seriousness shall, by the end, be able not only to understand but to *perform* Biblical Theology themselves.

2. Understanding the Biblical Meaning of Worship

Secondly, ye shall learn the Biblical meaning of worship. By the end of this class, we all—including myself—shall know more deeply what worship truly is in the sight of God. We shall learn how God Himself initiated worship, how He taught His people to worship, and for what purpose worship was ordained.

The Distinctiveness of Worship

God separated Israel from the nations and gave them a land, that they might be called by His Name, and that they might worship Him alone. The nations worshipped idols, but Israel was called to worship the living God. Therefore the Lord gave unto them a pattern of worship wholly distinct from the nations around them.

Today many imagine that worship consisted merely in singing songs. Yet singing is but *one part* of worship. True worship, as we shall learn, is the lifestyle of the people of God.

Biblical Theology: The Method

Biblical Theology takes *many small pictures* from Scripture and bringeth them together to form the *great picture*. First one examined the Pentateuch, and beholdeth how worship was commanded in the beginning. Then one looked into the Historical Books to see how worship was practiced in the land. Then into the Poetic Books to discern the heart of worship. Then into the Prophets to understand the correction and rebuke concerning worship.

Thus Biblical Theology lead us through the journey of Scripture.

The Heart of Worship: Lessons from Cain and Abel

Consider the story of Cain and Abel. One brother's offering was accepted; the other's rejected. Two Hebrew words are used for offering:

1. 'Olah (Burnt Offering)

This word signifies that acceptance or rejection dependent upon the *quality* of the offering. If the sacrifice be according to God's standard, it is accepted; if defective, it is rejected.

2. Minhāh (Gift/Grain Offering)

This word signifies that acceptance dependent not upon the *quality* of the offering but upon the *heart* and *intent* of the worshipper. If the heart be right, even a small offering is accepted. If the heart be not right, even a great offering is rejected. This truth is also seen in the New Testament: "God loves a cheerful giver."

In the story of Cain and Abel, the word used is **minhāh**. Thus Scripture pointed toward the truth that one brother's *heart* was not right, and for this cause God rejected his offering.

Worship is therefore not merely outward action, but a relationship of love with God.

Israel's Repeated Failure

Israel, though chosen of God, repeatedly fell under judgment because they turned to the gods of the nations. Their downfall came because they did not understand the seriousness of worship. They regarded worship lightly, and therefore were led astray.

Definition of Biblical Theology (Simple)

Biblical Theology is the study wherein we gather the smaller pictures from different parts of Scripture that we may behold the great picture of God's revelation concerning a particular subject—in this case, worship.

The Development of Biblical Theology

Perspectives and the Progressive Unfolding of Concepts

In Biblical writings we behold diverse perspectives and manifold understandings. Consider, for example, the theme of Worship: as we read the Scriptures, that theme unfolded gradually and by degrees. Certain aspects are found within the Pentateuch; further aspects shine forth in the Historical Books; additional shades appear in the Poetical Writings; and when we draw nigh unto the Prophetic Literature, fresh perspectives again come into view. Thus by gathering together all these portions, we discern what manner of worship the LORD requires.

Thereafter, when we advance unto the New Testament, the Gospels, and namely the Synoptic Gospels, we behold how the doctrine of worship is declared therein. (I but lay before you an outline.) Then we proceed unto the Johannine Gospel and Johannine writings, and perceive

how worship is there set forth; and likewise in the Book of Acts we behold how the early Church practised worship with great earnestness. Then consider how the Apostle Paul declared worship; and finally we look unto Hebrews and the Book of Genesis, where many matters that began at the first are again revealed anew in the Apocalypse, where the LORD uncovered a fresh beginning.

Thus, by taking these many smaller pictures, we form a full and complete concept of what Holy Scripture truly declared.

The Theme of Sufferings: An Illustration

Let me give unto you another illustration: the theme of Sufferings, human afflictions, and the sorrows that befall the faithful. This too is a subject—"The Biblical Theology of Sufferings." When we consider it, we again behold a progression. In the Pentateuch, the principle of Retribution is evident: he that doeth evil suffered; he that doeth good suffered not. Yet this theme growth throughout the Historical Books. More perspectives arise in the Poetical Writings. In the Prophetic Books the matter expands: we behold, for example, a prophet suffering on behalf of the nation—*the perspective shifted*. At first an individual suffered because of his own sin; but with time we perceive that a man may suffer for the sins of the people.

Then in the Gospels the matter again altered. Then in the Acts of the Apostles, the early Church suffered for a different cause—namely, for the spread of the Gospel. Often we remain trapped only within the Pentateuch, and if any man suffer, we hasten to draw verses from thence and declare, "Some misfortune hath befallen him." But Scripture presented more than that first perspective.

Through time perspectives increase, and God added new dimensions. The same is true concerning Worship. One cannot establish doctrine from a single verse; one must understand the entire theology from Genesis unto Revelation, discerning how things altered through the ages, where we now stand, and how God willeth that we worship Him.

Biblical Theology versus Systematic Theology

Thus Biblical Theology different greatly from Systematic Theology. Systematic Theology dealt with topical studies; but Biblical Theology dealt with narrative—*the story*. Through these many narratives we strive to discern the great story of Scripture and the themes that run from Genesis to Revelation.

Consider certain enduring themes: Judgment; Blood; Obedience and Disobedience; the Seed. From the Book of Genesis onward, the teaching of the Seed unfolded—seed, seed, seed; lineage, lineage, lineage; then again the Seed, and the line of David. A complete storyline arises, and our task is to trace that storyline to understand where we now stand, and likewise where Worship now standeth. This is the same pattern whereby we traced the journey of Israel.

Another great theme in Biblical Theology is the Covenant. Covenants arise from Genesis onward—some major, some smaller—yet the teaching of covenant reappears continually. Another theme is Redemption—deliverance, release, and salvation—from Genesis onward God instructed His people in many ways through His writers and servants.

How to Do Biblical Theology

What then is the method? Number one: read the Bible repeatedly. Biblical Theology may be done upon a single book, upon a single covenant, or upon the whole Bible. Our class shall consider the whole Bible.

If you desire to conduct Biblical Theology on a particular book, then the first requirement is to read that book again and again. Write this down as the mechanism: **read repeatedly**. Only by repeated reading shall you discern which matters are repeated within the book. Whatever themes appear again and again—these are the major themes, and the major themes form the Biblical Theology of that book.

For example, in the Book of Acts ye shall behold more than one theme, yet one great theme standeth forth—the Expansion of the Gospel from Jerusalem even unto the ends of the earth. Another theme is Sufferings: the early believers must needs endure sorrows for the spread of the Gospel.

Though the matter may seem difficult at the first, be not troubled: understanding shall come with time. The purpose is not merely to give unto you information, but to instruct you *how* Biblical Theology is to be done. This subject is technical, and I must prepare you to work within Biblical Theology.

The Need for Understanding Modern Scholarship

Why is this important? Because much of modern scholarship is rooted in Biblical Theology. Without this understanding, you will not comprehend their writings. But through this course you shall grasp the basics, and shall be able, if God will, to conduct Biblical Theology yourselves.

Take the Book of Acts: I have given you two major themes. Hold one of them and write a paper—research it. Examine how the Gospel spread from chapter to chapter unto the last chapter. This is a journey—a biblical-theological journey—that beginneth at a point and through many stages leaded unto a conclusion and unto a balanced doctrine.

Historical Development within Scripture

It is a progressive, historical development—yet it is not Historical Theology. Historical Theology concerned how the Church accepted doctrines through time. Biblical Theology, though it also employed a historical approach, seeketh to behold how doctrines *within Scripture itself* developed and unfolded—what increased, what changed, what was added or diminished, and where we now stand.

Therefore we shall not begin with the Prophets and then jump unto the Gospels; rather, we follow the biblical order and observe how arguments develop step by step. Systematic Theology different: there one chooses a topic—angels, for example—and gathered verses from here and there to form an outline. But Biblical Theology is the theology of the biblical writers. It asked: *What were the authors truly declaring?*

Exegesis versus Eisegesis

Biblical Theology dependeth upon exegesis. *Ex* meant “out of,” and exegesis signifies drawing truth out of the text. *Eis* meaneth “into,” and eisegesis is the inserting of our own ideas into the text. Biblical Theology proceeded by exegesis, not eisegesis. You shall select the text, read it repeatedly, and draw forth its points—what the text itself declared, not what you desire to impose upon it.

Because ye know not the original languages, I shall help you through the points and show how interpretation may be discerned. Thus Biblical Theology is at times called Exegetical Theology—not because it is the same discipline, but because its method is grounded in drawing truth out of the text.

Identifying Key Points and Their Importance

After reading repeatedly and highlighting the repeated themes, ye must ask: *What saith the text concerning this matter?* And secondly: *Why are these points important?* Why hath the Holy Spirit included them? Only then shall ye rightly discern the significance of each portion.

In this class I shall continually ask you: “What is the perspective in the Pentateuch? What is the perspective in the Historical Books? In the Poetical Writings? In the Prophets?” Ye must know these movements, for this is how the class shall proceed.

Thus, number one: read Scripture again and again. Number two: identify important themes. Number three: determine what the text truly saith. Number four: discern why these matters are important.

And in this manner ye shall be enabled to do Biblical Theology.

Why It Is Needful to Study Biblical Theology

To Know the Truth and the Author’s Purpose

Why is it needful to study Biblical Theology? Now that I have declared unto you what Biblical Theology is, let me also set forth why it is necessary. First, that we may know the truth; that we may understand the main purpose of Holy Scripture. It helped us to discern the mind of the author. The sacred writers of the Holy Bible wrote with a particular purpose, in a particular time, and with a particular understanding. We must not, in our present age, merely read the text and begin a literal interpretation without context. In Biblical Theology we behold the setting and season in which the book was written—what the circumstances were, what issues lay before the writer, and with what thought he wrote. Therefore Biblical Theology is needful, for it clarified the author’s main intention.

Yet though there were many human authors, the true Author is God Himself. Therefore Biblical Theology revealed unto us the heart of God and the purpose of God—what worship is, and what He requires of His people.

To Preserve Our Faith

Furthermore, Biblical Theology is needful because it preserved our faith. Suppose thou takes the topic of Worship and hast memorized only a single verse from the Gospel of John: “The Father seeketh such to worship Him.” If any man then ask thee a question, thou mayest be

troubled, because thou hast never beheld the whole development of the concept of worship. Hence thou wouldest fall into difficulty.

Biblical Theology delivered us from such confusion. The Old Testament teaches us that God Himself appointed holy places, and sanctified them, and commanded Israel to worship therein. In the New Testament the theme developed further, and we read that God seeketh worshippers who worship Him in spirit and in truth. The entire Old Testament formeth the background to this declaration. Why doth God now seek such worshippers? Because in the old days the people clung unto the places, and through that attachment they drifted far from God. Therefore the LORD saith, "I seek not a place, but a heart that worshipped Me in truth."

To Understand What the Writer Truly Saith

Moreover, Biblical Theology is needful because it gives us understanding. It showed what the author truly declared. It helped us discern what the Bible desired to teach—what Ephesus meaneth, what any given writer emphasized, and where the weight of the message lieth. It helped us grasp the true emphasis of every passage.

Thus we have beheld the definition of Biblical Theology. We have seen how it ought to be done—*how to do Biblical Theology*. We have seen the difference between Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology, and how this approach different from other theological disciplines. And then we have seen why it is necessary.

The Approach We Shall Follow

In today's class we have dealt only with Biblical Theology. Hereafter we shall study Worship, yet according to this approach. According to this model we shall study it. If we are in the Pentateuch, we shall deal with the questions that arise within the Pentateuch. We shall not import passages from another place until their proper time. Later we shall look unto the New Testament, but first we must understand how the concept began, and how historically it advanced unto its fuller form. Only then shall we see how Worship developed through time.

Students' Reflections and Questions

Are there any questions at the end? Who among you desired to tell the definition once more? What is Biblical Theology? One of you hath answered rightly—now refine the definition. One basic element will complete it. What is the approach? What is the manner of study?

The approach is this: I must gather many small pictures and form one great picture. The example I gave was for this purpose—that from small doctrines, small books, and small portions, we may form one great doctrine.

Our brother Shaukar gave a good example. This work remained like a puzzle until we reach the end; yet even so, we shall try to understand the pieces along the way. Throughout this course I shall teach you fifteen principles. In every class I shall bring a question concerning worship, and at the end we shall discuss it theologically.

Clarification Concerning the Word "Biblical"

A question hath been raised: In English it is known that the word “Bible” meaneth “Books,” but in our Pakistani context, when we hear the word “Biblical,” we think at once of theology. Therefore the question is whether we ought to use the term “Biblical Theology,” because among us the word “Biblical” is often taken as though it referred automatically to doctrine.

This is a good and rightful question. Ordinarily when we say “Biblical,” we imagine that it referred to a doctrine from the Bible. But this specific term—*Biblical Theology*—is the name of an entire field. I did not invent it; it hath its own history. This is the approach by which the discipline proceeded. The name itself showed that it seeketh to discern how the entire Bible, historically and progressively, speaketh concerning any doctrine.

The key element in the definition is this: our approach shall be step by step, tracing how concepts advance. For example, “The Father seeketh such to worship Him”—yet in the early Church in the Acts of the Apostles we see not the same temple system as in the Old Testament. Thus we shall learn how concepts changed through the ages.

