



INTRODUCTION: HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This guide is written for those who have not had any formal theological education. Provided you have a desire to know the Scriptures, even if you have only achieved a very basic knowledge so far, this book is designed for you. Of course, if you have been to Bible college or theological college this book could still be for you. I believe that many preachers, ministers, Scripture teachers, youth leaders and the like will benefit from studying the basics of biblical theology. So, this is a beginner's guide in the sense that I have tried to introduce the subject without assuming much prior knowledge. I do assume, however, that you are a believer in Jesus Christ and that you have some basic understanding of what the Bible is all about.

This is also a beginner's guide in that I have kept the discussion to the essentials of the biblical message. By keeping the chapters short and by using diagrams and frequent summary statements, I hope to lead even the timid reader step by step through the paths of biblical theology.

FOUR PARTS

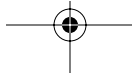
The main part of the book is part three, which outlines the content of biblical theology. I have included the other three parts in order to make the book more complete in its practical use. The four parts are as follows:

Part One: Biblical Theology—WHY?

Read chapter one first. Biblical theology is not an academic exercise but an essential part of understanding the Bible. The aim is to suggest some of the practical situations and problems in understanding and applying the Bible that need knowledge of biblical theology.

Part Two: Biblical Theology—HOW?

Read chapters two through seven next only if you think you are ready to consider questions of a more theoretical nature. But don't be too easily put off, and in any case you should read this section at some time. Here the





concern is knowing how we can do biblical theology and be sure that we are dealing with the truth. You may have always assumed that the Bible is the Word of God, and that its essential message is clear, but can you give a reason for that assumption? What determines the method of biblical theology? Different people have used different methods and, for a lot of Christians, it is easier to ignore the question of method completely. It is important that we become aware of the things we have taken for granted, and that we recognize our own assumptions. But, if all that sounds too heavy, I suggest you read this section after you have read part three.

Part Three: Biblical Theology—WHAT?

Read chapters eight through twenty-five even if you read nothing else. This is the heart of the book. Remember that this book is not an exhaustive treatment of all the themes and materials found in the Bible. If some of your favorite characters or events in the Bible have not rated a mention, you may find that they are not as central to the biblical message as you thought, or that they do not add any theological concepts to those already dealt with. Obviously, it is not possible to deal with every part of the Bible, but I have tried to include the most significant themes of revelation.

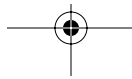
Part Four: Biblical Theology—WHERE?

Section four has been kept to an absolute minimum in the interests of brevity. I did not want a beginner's guide to be so long that it would discourage beginners from acquiring and reading it. The practical application of biblical theology in the investigation of subjects vital to our Christian living really needs a separate volume of its own. But in order to show what kinds of issues can be researched profitably using the approach of biblical theology, I have included a couple of outlines which you may take up in greater detail yourself. The important thing is that you gain confidence in applying biblical theology regarding the questions that really concern you.

VISUAL IMPACT

To assist you to digest the contents of this book, I have used chapter subdivisions, summaries and diagrams.

In the second section of the book each chapter begins with a summary of the argument. This enables you to preview what the chapter is about and then, after you have read the chapter, to review it. Read these summa-





ries carefully to get the general idea, then go on to the more detailed discussion in the body of the chapter.

In part three, each chapter begins with a brief summary of the biblical history relevant to the chapter, followed by references to the biblical books involved. Also in this section each chapter is headed with a selection of Bible texts. Note these Bible texts well. They are all taken from the New Testament and link the theme of the chapter to the person and work of Christ. They remind us of the way the Gospels interpret the whole Bible.

The subdivisions of each chapter are found under subheadings. I have aimed at some logical progression of ideas indicated in the subheadings. Most subdivisions conclude with a brief summary of its main ideas.

The end of each chapter of part three contains five main elements:

1. The heading summarizes the theme of the chapter as part of the total message of the Bible, which moves from the creation to the new creation.

REGENERATION OF A NATION

2. A short summary of the chapter directs our attention to the idea of the kingdom of God as a central and unifying theme of the Bible. A diagram is used to show the way the theme of the kingdom is progressively built in stages as we move through the biblical story. It represents the three elements of the kingdom: God as ruling Lord, his people and the created order in which God and his people relate. By this means we can see at a glance how any given stage of biblical history reveals the nature of the kingdom.

SUMMARY

Mankind's rebellion against God results in the fall of the whole created order from its place in the kingdom of God

KINGDOM	GOD	MANKIND	WORLD
CREATION	GOD	ADAM AND EVE	EDEN
FALL			

3. The main themes of the chapter are listed. These are the building blocks of biblical theology, which shows the texture of revelation. In time you





should aim to become familiar with these concepts and with the way they are woven into the biblical story.

MAIN THEMES

Sovereignty of God

Creation *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) by the word of God

Order and goodness of creation

Image of God in man

4. Some key words are provided as a guide to the technical vocabulary of biblical theology. These words have been introduced in the chapter. If you find you cannot recognize any of them, perhaps a second reading is called for. Further research can be done using a good concordance and other reference books such as a Bible dictionary or theological dictionary.

SOME KEY WORDS

Creation/generation

Sovereignty

Image

Kingdom

5. Finally we briefly preview the path ahead. This important section reminds us that no significant biblical theme can be viewed on its own without linking it to its goal or fulfillment in Christ. This is a sketch of the development of major biblical themes and ideas from Old Testament to New Testament.

THE PATH AHEAD

Adam—last Adam, 1 Corinthians 15:45

Creation—new creation, 2 Corinthians 5:17

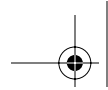
Heavens and earth—new heavens and earth, Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1

STUDY SUGGESTIONS

At the end of each chapter it is up to you.

Study guides ask questions and set tasks to encourage you to rehearse the material. A beginner's guide cannot be read like a novel if you are going to get the best out of it. You need to think about what you have read and apply the concepts.



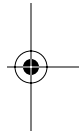


I recommend two books for you to read if you desire to build on the material of this book. The first is my book *Gospel and Kingdom*, which gives an overview of the kingdom theme. The second is *Biblical Theology* by Geerhardus Vos, which will amply reward careful study. At the end of chapters are other suggestions for related reading.

NOTES

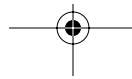
To keep the format simple I have avoided footnotes. However, there are some circumstances which demand notes of explanation or acknowledgment of sources. These notes are placed at the end of the chapter.

Now read on, but please note concerning the word *man* that I am aware of the problems associated with its use in the generic, inclusive sense to mean "humankind." I have therefore used a variety of synonyms (*humanity, humankind* and *mankind*), but in some contexts these can be a little cumbersome. I have therefore retained a limited use of the generic term *man*.



ABBREVIATIONS USED IN LISTS OF BOOKS FOR FURTHER READING

- BT* Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1948.
- GK* Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*. Exeter, U.K.: Paternoster Press, 1981.
- IBD* *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980.
- KG* John Bright, *The Kingdom of God*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1953.
- TNTC* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries.
- TOTC* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries.
- ZPEB* *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 5 vols. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1975.





ABBREVIATIONS USED FOR BIBLICAL REFERENCES

The books of the Old Testament

Gen *Genesis*
 Ex *Exodus*
 Lev *Leviticus*
 Num *Numbers*
 Deut *Deuteronomy*
 Josh *Joshua*
 Judg *Judges*
 Ruth *Ruth*
 1 Sam *1 Samuel*
 2 Sam *2 Samuel*
 1 Kings *1 Kings*
 2 Kings *2 Kings*
 1 Chron *1 Chronicles*
 2 Chron *2 Chronicles*
 Ezra *Ezra*
 Neh *Nehemiah*
 Esther *Esther*
 Job *Job*
 Ps *Psalms*
 Prov *Proverbs*
 Eccles *Ecclesiastes*
 Song *Song of Songs*
 Is *Isaiah*
 Jer *Jeremiah*
 Lam *Lamentations*
 Ezek *Ezekiel*
 Dan *Daniel*
 Hos *Hosea*
 Joel *Joel*
 Amos *Amos*
 Obad *Obadiah*
 Jon *Jonah*
 Mic *Micah*
 Nahum *Nahum*

Hab *Habakkuk*
 Zeph *Zephaniah*
 Hag *Haggai*
 Zech *Zechariah*
 Mal *Malachi*

The books of the New Testament

Mt *Matthew*
 Mk *Mark*
 Lk *Luke*
 Jn *John*
 Acts *Acts*
 Rom *Romans*
 1 Cor *1 Corinthians*
 2 Cor *2 Corinthians*
 Gal *Galatians*
 Eph *Ephesians*
 Phil *Philippians*
 Col *Colossians*
 1 Thess *1 Thessalonians*
 2 Thess *2 Thessalonians*
 1 Tim *1 Timothy*
 2 Tim *2 Timothy*
 Tit *Titus*
 Philem *Philemon*
 Heb *Hebrews*
 Jas *James*
 1 Pet *1 Peter*
 2 Pet *2 Peter*
 1 Jn *1 John*
 2 Jn *2 John*
 3 Jn *3 John*
 Jude *Jude*
 Rev *Revelation*

