

Building Biblical Theology

Lesson 3

Diachronic Developments in
the Old Testament

Lesson Guide



thirdmill

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HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

This lesson guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video. If you do not have access to the video, the lesson guide will also work with the audio and/or manuscript versions of the lesson. Additionally, the video and lesson guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — The Notes section of the lesson guide has been divided into segments that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the lesson guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each segment and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Notes

I. Introduction (0:28)

Biblical theology focuses on how Old Testament theology developed with the passing of time.

Diachronic Development: the ways theological structures grew or developed over time.

II. Orientation (4:09)

A. Diachronic (4:40)

From Greek:

- *Dia* — through or throughout
- *Chronos* — time

“Diachronic” points to the ways Old Testament theology transformed, changed or developed through time.

1. Contrast (5:09)

- Synchronic Synthesis: (scenes in a movie) theological structures that emerged within chosen periods of biblical history.
- Diachronic Approaches: (storyline of a movie) how theological structures progressively unfolded through time.

Example:

Exodus 1:1-19:1 (Israel's deliverance from Egypt)

- Synchronic Approach: What did God do and say during this period?
- Diachronic Approach: What changes in theology occurred?

2. Interdependence (7:44)

As biblical theologians handle the Scriptures, they move back and forth between synchronic and diachronic work.

- Diachronic analysis precedes even a very short synchronic synthesis.

- When we consider longer periods of time, our diachronic analysis depends on synchronic synthesis.

B. Development (9:38)

1. Divine Purposes (10:17)

Everything in history, including shifts in theology, accomplish God's unfailing purposes for his creation.

God's goals for history exist not only as broad, long-term goals but also as particular, short-term goals:

- David's kingdom (short term)

- All-encompassing kingdom purpose (long term)

2. Divine Providence (12:52)

These developments occurred in connection with God's providential involvement in history.

- Expected

- Inexplicable

- Responsive

C. Example (16:50)

Matthew 19:3-9 (Jesus' teaching on divorce)

Jesus gave a brief synchronic summary of marriage based on the first chapters of Genesis.

Jesus explained that a significant diachronic development had taken place between the time of creation and the period of Moses.

Jesus understood marriage and divorce in light of diachronic developments in Old Testament theology.

III. Epochal Developments (22:18)

Biblical theologians often describe the development of Old Testament theology in terms of the ways God's revelations divide history into major periods or epochs.

A. Diverse Emphases (23:42)

We will illustrate epochal developments by returning to the influence of divine covenants.

1. Universal Covenants (25:44)

Between God and all humanity:

- Adam — the covenant of foundations

- Noah — the covenant of stability

2. National Covenants (29:41)

Between God and Israel:

- Abraham — covenant of promise

- Moses — covenant of law

- David — covenant of kingship

3. **New Covenant (33:42)**

The last major covenant mentioned in the Old Testament.

- Jeremiah 31:31

The covenant of fulfillment:

- First coming of Christ
 - redemption
 - resurrection
 - ascension
 - Holy Spirit
 - work of the apostles

- Spread of faith
- Jesus' return

The six major divine covenants provide us with ways of understanding the different emphases of major historical epochs in the Old Testament.

B. Organic Unity (37:54)

The epochs of Old Testament history exhibited continuity with each other like the stages of growth in living organisms.

1. Kingdom Administration (38:46)

The major divine covenants in Scripture served as the main ways God administered his kingdom through its various historical stages.

All Old Testament covenants shared the same ultimate goal: to extend God's glorious kingdom throughout the earth.

The order in which Old Testament covenants appear reveals their unity.

- Adam
- Noah
- Abraham
- Moses
- David
- New Covenant

2. **Abiding Authority (40:43)**

The authority of earlier covenants always extended to later covenants.

- Moses considered divine covenants that came before him authoritative for his own day.
- The covenant with Moses had continuing authority after his time.

1. **Extended Application (44:12)**

The principles of earlier epochs had to be applied in ways that were appropriate for later times.

God's people had to remember:

- Not to live as if they were in an earlier covenant age.
- Never to forget the wisdom of what God had taught in earlier ages.

For instance:

- Noah: emphasis on natural stability
- Abraham: applied to Israel's patriarchs
- Moses: seen in light of God's revealed Law
- David: seen in light of David's kingship

IV. **Topical Developments (48:51)**

The developments of Old Testament theology can be described in terms of particular topics.

A. Traditional Topics (50:22)

Topics of traditional systematic theology:

- Theology proper (doctrine of God)
- Anthropology (doctrine of humanity)
- Soteriology (doctrine of salvation)
- Ecclesiology (doctrine of the church)
- Eschatology (doctrine of last things)

From time to time, biblical theologians have followed these basic categories for at least two reasons:

- Useful

- To provide exegetical information to systematics

When concerned with diachronic developments: How did this doctrine develop or mature through the history of theological changes in the Old Testament?

For instance: Theology proper

B. Typology (55:09)**1. Definition (56:28)**

Broad definition: Any diachronic development of topics in Old Testament theology.

Biblical typology is the study of diachronic developments between the theological structures closely associated with significant persons, institutions and events in Scripture.

Examples:

- Romans 5:14 (Adam and Christ)

- 1 Peter 3:20-21 (baptism and Noah's flood)

- Colossians 2:17 (Law and Christ)

- John 3:14-15 (serpent and crucifixion)

2. Features (1:01:08)

a. Figures of Speech

Figures of comparison are indirect ways of describing things by comparing them with something else.

Three main elements:

- Image (type)

- Topic (antitype)

- Points of comparison

b. Variety of Elements

Three basic groups:

- Persons
 - Human beings
 - Spiritual creatures
 - God
 - Aspects of creation (personified)

- Institutions
 - Locations
 - Rituals
 - Organizations
 - Buildings

- Events
 - Historical occurrences

c. Theological Structures

Typologies in the Bible always compare the theological structures that are closely associated with their elements.

When biblical writers mentioned particular persons, institutions, or events as elements of typologies, they had in mind the larger theological structures that those elements represented.

Examples:

- Romans 5:14 (Adam and Christ)

- 1 Peter 3:20-21 (Noah's flood and Christian baptism)

d. Theological developments

Typologies in Scripture always reflect diachronic developments.

Romans 5:14-15 (Adam and Christ)

- Similarities:

- Differences:

e. **Serial typologies**

Typologies often appear in series.

Example: Worship in the Old Testament

- Garden of Eden

- Early altars

- The tabernacle

- The temple in Jerusalem

- Zerubbabel's temple

3. Identification (1:16:47)

a. Anticipation

When types appeared in Old Testament history, they were designed to point toward future antitypes.

Recent View:

“Intertextualities” — treat typologies as literary phenomena, the ways one biblical text treats another.

New Testament authors:

“Interactualities” — historical realities that anticipated future historical realities as their antitypes.

- Romans 5:14

- Colossians 2:17

God gave specific, special revelations to people that enabled them to have foreknowledge.

- Prophets
- Other leading Old Testament figures

Types in the Old Testament were associated with theological structures whose future developments God had already revealed.

Examples:

- Genesis 1:28
- Genesis 15:18
- Psalm 72:11, 17

b. Reflection

Identifying how most types would develop into their antitypes involves reflecting from the vantage point of later times.

Types often look so different from their antitypes that anticipating their developments would have been nearly impossible.

- Noah's flood and Christian baptism
- Bronze serpent and Christ's crucifixion
- Acorn and tree

Instead of trying to understand types and antitypes by predicting the latter from the former, we must usually rely on a process of reflection.

While types truly anticipated their antitypes, normally we can only identify these anticipations after their antitypes have appeared in history.

Identifying typologies is an important part of studying diachronic developments in the Old Testament.

V. Conclusion (1:31:18)

Review Questions

1. Explain what is meant by the term “diachronic.”
2. Why do we use the term “development” instead of simply speaking of diachronic changes? How does this development involve divine purposes and divine providence?

7. Describe three aspects of the relationships between different covenant ages.

8. What are the most common topics of traditional systematic theology and how do biblical theologians approach these topics?

9. What is biblical typology and why is it important to the study of biblical theology? Give examples.

10. What are five important features of typologies in Scripture, and how do we identify typologies in the Old Testament?

Application Questions

1. What makes understanding how the Bible's theology developed over time so important for us as we seek to apply the Old Testament to our own lives or teach it to others?
2. What are some ways that we might misinterpret and/or misapply the Bible if we fail to understand how biblical theology developed over time?
3. How can Jesus' description of the diachronic development of marriage be an example for us as we seek to do biblical theology today?
4. In what ways should we apply the Scriptures concerning aspects of Old Testament worship (sacrifice, temple, Passover meal) in church services today under the new covenant?
5. In what ways might Christians today be tempted to live as if we were in an earlier age of redemptive history, before the coming of Christ?
6. In what ways might Christians today be tempted to forget the wisdom that God had taught in earlier ages?
7. What is the importance of understanding the Scriptures' use of typology for the study of the Bible?
8. In what ways can typology point us forward to the realities that we will experience when Christ returns, and how can this give us hope in the present time?
9. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study?
10. What areas of study do you believe you need to pursue further after this lesson?

Glossary

antítupos – Greek word (transliteration) meaning "antitype"

antitype – Theological term for something in Scripture that fulfills a previous representation; the topic or item to which the "type" is being compared

berith – Hebrew term (transliteration) most commonly translated "covenant"; also spelled "berit"

biblical theology – Theological reflection drawn from the historical analysis of acts of God reported in Scripture

covenant of foundations – God's covenant with Adam that emphasized the goals of God's kingdom and the role of human beings in his kingdom

covenant of fulfillment – God's covenant with his people in Christ that was designed to reverse the failures of the past and fulfill God's kingdom purposes; also called the "new covenant"

covenant of kingship – God's covenant with David that established Israel as a kingdom and emphasized that David's royal dynasty would endure, and his descendant would sit on the throne and reign forever

covenant of law – God's covenant with Moses that set God's law before the tribes of Israel as a unified nation

covenant of promise – God's covenant with Abraham that emphasized promises for the increase of Israel and possession of the Promised Land, and designated Israel to spread God's blessings to the entire world; sometimes called the Covenant of Israel's Election

covenant of stability – God's covenant with Noah that assured nature's stability

diachronic – Occurring across a period of time

diachronic development – The ways Old Testament theology transformed, changed, or developed over time

diachrony – Concerned with the passage of time

epochal developments – The development of Old Testament theology in terms of the ways God's revelations divide history into major periods or epochs

interactualities – Biblical types treated as actual historical realities that anticipated future historical realities as their antitypes

intertextuality – Approach to biblical interpretation that reduces biblical typologies to the ways one biblical text treats another biblical text for particular theological ends

national covenant – A covenant made with an individual who represented the nation of Israel (Abraham, Moses, and David)

new covenant – The covenant of fulfillment in Christ; first mentioned in Jeremiah 31:31

synchronic synthesis – The ways different components of theology revealed in a particular period of history fit together in a coherent, logical structure

synecdoche – A figure of speech in which a part of an idea stands for larger, closely associated theological ideas

type – Theological term for something in Scripture that represents a future reality

typology – The study of how significant persons, institutions and events throughout biblical history prefigure later persons, institutions and events in Scripture; the study of types

universal covenant – A covenant made with an individual who represented all of mankind (Adam and Noah)