



HEBRON

Wednesday, March 6, 2019

Dr. Landon Dowden

WHAT IS A HEALTHY CHURCH?

LESSON 3

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

I. Initial Questions:

- a. Why is it important that what we teach and believe about God comes from the Bible?
- b. When something about God is revealed in the Bible, why can't we just say, "Well, the God I serve would never do that" or "I just can't believe that about God?"
- c. Why is it important to grasp the main point of the Bible or to understand the overall (big) picture of God's Word?
- d. If you were asked to trace the storyline of the Bible, how would you do it? What would the component parts be and what would the "whole" be? What would be the trees and the forest? How do each set of trees relate to the forest?
- e. List one passage from each of the genres in the Old Testament that you would use to tell someone about Jesus.
 - i. Law -
 - ii. History -
 - iii. Wisdom -
 - iv. Major Prophets -
 - v. Minor Prophets -

II. An Essential Mark of a Healthy Church: Biblical Theology (Dever – *What is a Healthy Church?*)

- a. Our churches should not only be concerned with *how* we are taught, but also with *what* we are taught.
- b. An essential mark of a healthy church is sound biblical theology, or theology that's biblical. Otherwise, we will interpret individual verses to mean whatever we want them to mean.



Wednesday, March 6, 2019
Dr. Landon Dowden

- c. Soundness – “reliable,” “accurate,” or “faithful;” whole or healthy (1 Timothy 1:10-11; 6:3; 2 Timothy 1:13; 4:3)
 - i. Biblically sound theology, then, is theology that is faithful to the teaching of the entire Bible. It reliably and accurately interprets the parts in terms of the whole.
 - ii. Pastors should teach sound doctrine – doctrine that is reliable, accurate, and faithful to the Bible. And churches are responsible for keeping their pastors accountable to sound doctrine.

- d. Unity, Diversity, and Charity.
 - i. In practice, every church decides where it requires complete agreement, where it permits limited disagreement, and where it allows complete liberty.
 - 1. At Capitol Hill Baptist Church:
 - a. We require every member to believe in salvation through the work of Jesus Christ alone. We also confess the same understandings of believer’s baptism and of church structure (that is, who has the final say in decisions).
 - b. Our church allows some disagreement over matters that are necessary neither for salvation nor for the practical life of the church (ex: the timing of Christ’s return).
 - c. Our church allows entire liberty on matters still less central or clear, such as the rightness of armed resistance or the question of who wrote the book of Hebrews.
 - 2. The closer we get to the heart of our faith, the more we expect unity in our understanding of the faith – in sound biblical doctrine.
 - 3. The early church put it this way: in essentials, unity; in nonessentials, diversity; in all things, charity.

- e. Complex or Controversial Doctrines
 - i. A church that is committed to sound teaching will commit to teaching the biblical doctrines churches too often neglect. To our eyes, certain doctrines may look difficult or even divisive. Yet we can trust that God has included them in His Word because they are foundational for understanding His work in salvation.
 - ii. If the Holy Spirit has revealed something in His Book for all the world to read, churches should not think of themselves as so wise that they do better to avoid certain subjects.
 - iii. (Important doctrinal) questions are not simply for bookish theologians or young seminary students.
 - iv. Faithfulness to Scripture demands that we speak about these issues with clarity and authority, as does our desire to display the character of God in all its fullness.



Wednesday, March 6, 2019
Dr. Landon Dowden

- f. Resisting God's Sovereignty
 - i. Our understanding of what the Bible teaches about God is crucial.
 - ii. When a church appoints a leader who doubts God's sovereignty or who misunderstands the Bible's teaching, that church sets up as their example a person who may be deeply unwilling to trust God.
 - iii. Too often today, the consumer-driven and materialistic culture around us encourages churches to understand the Spirit's work in terms of marketing and to turn evangelism into advertising.
 - iv. A healthy church must be especially careful to pray that its leaders would have a biblical and an experiential grasp of God's sovereignty. They should also pray that their leaders would remain fully committed to sound doctrine in its full, biblical glory.

III. **Jesus on Every Page**

- a. Goldsworthy: What went before Christ in the Old Testament, as well as what comes after him, finds its meaning in him.
 - i. Jesus is God's Word for the "last days" who brings the word of the Old Testament prophets to completion (Hebrews 1:1-2).
 - ii. Jesus is the end of God's saving acts in the history of Israel (Romans 1:1-4).
 - iii. Jesus fulfills all prophecy (Acts 13:32-33).
 - iv. Jesus' person and work are the real meaning of prophecy (1 Peter 1:10-12).
- b. The relationship of the Old Testament to Christ (from Goldsworthy)
 - i. Prophetic word – completed (Hebrews 1:1-2)
 - ii. All prophecy – fulfilled (Acts 13:32-33)
 - iii. David's line – ended (Romans 1:3)
 - iv. Promise to David – fulfilled (Acts 2:30-31)
 - v. Old Testament tells of salvation – in Christ (2 Timothy 3:15)
 - vi. Whole Old Testament – concerns Christ (Luke 24:27)
- c. Goldsworthy: The Kingdom of God = God's People in God's Place under God's Rule and Blessing

IV. **God's Big Picture (Vaughan Roberts)**

- a. The Old Testament:
 - i. The Pattern of the Kingdom (Genesis 1-2)
 - 1. God's people: Adam and Eve
 - 2. God's place: The Garden of Eden
 - 3. God's rule & blessing: God's word; perfect relationships



HEBRON

Wednesday, March 6, 2019

Dr. Landon Dowden

- ii. The Perished Kingdom (Genesis 3-11)
- iii. The Promised Kingdom (Genesis 12)
- iv. The Partial Kingdom
 - 1. God's People (Genesis 12 to Exodus 18)
 - 2. God's Rule and Blessing (Exodus 19 to Leviticus)
 - 3. God's Place/Land (Numbers to Joshua)
 - 4. God's King (Judges to 2 Chronicles)
- v. The Prophesied Kingdom (Isaiah-Malachi; Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther)

b. The New Testament:

- i. The Present Kingdom (Matthew-John)
- ii. The Proclaimed Kingdom (Acts-Jude)
- iii. The Perfected Kingdom (Revelation)
 - 1. God's People: Multi-national family of God
 - 2. God's Place: New creation, new Jerusalem, new temple
 - 3. God's Rule & Blessing: Throne of God and the Lamb; perfect blessing

c. The Wisdom Books (Job-Song of Solomon)

- i. Roberts: The wisdom books do not belong to any one chronological point in the history of God's unfolding work of salvation. They speak to all ages about how life should be lived in His kingdom.

V. *Christ from Beginning to End: How the Full Story of Scripture Reveals the Full Glory of Christ* (Hunter & Wellum)

a. Introduction: Getting the Story Straight

- i. Yes, the Bible is complex. And some sections can be quite complicated. But what if the Bible's complexity isn't a hurdle to jump but a scenic trail to run? What if the Bible's many characters, events, and places are not in the way of getting to know Jesus but are the way to know him? What if the Bible's numerous pages aren't a reason for intimidation but a call to exploration?
- ii. Conviction 1: The Bible is a book about Jesus Christ.
- iii. Conviction 2: The Bible is a unified story.
- iv. Conviction 3: Through the Bible's story, we come to know Jesus in all his glory.
- v. The better you read the story of the Bible, the better you can fathom Christ's glory. But if you read the story inaccurately, you risk misunderstanding who Jesus is and why his work is necessary, incomparable, and unique. Getting the Bible's story right is foundational for knowing Christ.



Wednesday, March 6, 2019
Dr. Landon Dowden

vi. Why getting the story straight matters:

1. A story for seeing – Luke 24 – Unless we grasp the Bible’s story correctly, we’ll miss the true significance of the New Testament message. To grasp these truths accurately – why Christ had to suffer for our sins, why his blood was necessary to reconcile us to God, and what redemption is – we need to see how they fit into the rest of the Bible. The entire story of the Bible – not just verses pulled out here and there – helps us to know Christ and to know him for all that he is.
2. A story for growing – The same thing that muse Christians also grows us as Christians: the grace of God revealed in the gospel. The more faithfully we understand the whole Bible, the better equipped we are to faithfully follow him.
3. A story for guarding – By reading Scripture correctly, we guard and defend the truth of the gospel.
4. A story for spreading – To preach Jesus rightly, we must do so from within Scripture’s own story and worldview (Acts 17). Scripture’s storyline gives us the metanarrative in which the gospel is truly seen as good news. Only the true and whole story of Scripture can counter the false worship of our day. Growing in our knowledge of the Bible’s full story will help us as we take the gospel to our neighbors and to the nations.
5. Like a puzzle, the pieces of the Bible – the various books, letters, characters, and stories – do fit together. The Bible contains mysteries, but its meaning is not intended to be mysterious or hidden from us, especially in its central teaching. God does not try to hide truth from us; he reveals it. The Bible reveals more than a picture for us to enjoy. It reveals a person for us to know. Jesus is that person.

b. Reading the Story

- i. Creation: A Garden Full of God’s Glory
- ii. Fall: A Day Full of Death
- iii. Redemption: A Story Full of Promise
- iv. Noah: A Boat Full of Life
- v. Abraham: A Sky Full of Stars
- vi. Moses: A Mountain Full of Smoke
- vii. David: A Throne Full of Hope
- viii. The Prophets: A Message Full of Tension
- ix. Jesus: A Cup Full of Blood
- x. Church: A People Full of the Spirit
- xi. New Creation: A World Full of God’s Glory



HEBRON

Wednesday, March 6, 2019

Dr. Landon Dowden

- c. Conclusion: Finding Our Story in His
 - i. Do you know Jesus Christ?
 - ii. Growing together in His joy
 - iii. Spreading Christ everywhere

VI. A Healthy Church Member is a Biblical Theologian (Anyabwile – *What is a Healthy Church Member?*)

- a. Packer: Ignorance of God – ignorance both of His ways and of the practice of communion with Him – lies at the root of the church’s weakness today.
- b. What is Biblical Theology?
 - i. To know God Himself
 - 1. The Bible is the self-revelation of God.
 - 2. The Christian church member who is serious about knowing God is the member who is committed to what the Bible says about God, because the Bible is where God tells us about himself.
 - ii. To know God’s macro story of redemption
 - 1. The biblical theologian is a person committed to understanding the history of revelation, the grand themes and doctrines of the Bible, and how they fit together.
 - 2. Knowing the unity and progression of the whole and not just isolated or favorite passages.
- c. How does biblical theology work to promote health in a church member?
 - i. Practicing biblical theology helps us grow in our reverence for God.
 - ii. Practicing biblical theology helps us to overcome our wrong ideas.
 - iii. Practicing biblical theology helps inoculate the church against doctrinal controversies.
 - iv. The practice of biblical theology is necessary to fulfilling the Great Commission.
 - v. Biblical theology deepens our understanding of and facility with the gospel.
- d. How to become a healthy church member by becoming a biblical theologian
 - i. Read a good book on biblical theology.
 - ii. Study the Scriptures thematically.
 - iii. Adopt the New Testament’s attitude toward the Old Testament
 - 1. How is this passage a fulfillment of something promised in the Old Testament?
 - 2. How is this New Testament idea different from or similar to an Old Testament teaching?



HEBRON

Wednesday, March 6, 2019

Dr. Landon Dowden

3. In what way does this New Testament passage clarify, unveil, or amplify something from the Old Testament?
- iv. Study the Old Testament with Jesus and the New Testament in view.
- v. Study the books of prophecy in the Old Testament.
- vi. Know and agree to support your church's statement of faith.
- vii. Seek doctrinal unity and avoid needless disputes.

VII. Biblical Theology Resources

- a. *Christ from Beginning to End* – Hunter & Wellum
- b. *God's Big Picture* - Roberts
- c. *Biblical Theology* – Lawrence
- d. *Biblical Theology: How the Church Faithfully Teaches the Gospel* – Roark & Cline
- e. *Gospel and Kingdom* – Goldsworthy
- f. *According to Plan* – Goldsworthy
- g. *Jesus on Every Page* - Murray
- h. *The Big Picture Story Bible* – Helm
- i. *The Jesus Storybook Bible* – Sally Lloyd-Jones

VIII. Books I would read with someone I was mentoring (in addition to the Bible):

- a. *What is the Gospel?* – Greg Gilbert
- b. *Lord Teach Me to Study the Bible in 28 days* – Kay Arthur (*Bible Study*)
- c. *Christ from Beginning to End* – Hunter & Wellum
- d. *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church or What is a Healthy Church?* – Mark Dever (*Ecclesiology*)
- e. *Christian Beliefs or Systematic Theology* – Wayne Grudem (*Theology*)
- f. *Knowing God* – J. I. Packer (*Theology*)
- g. *The Unquenchable Flame* - Reeves (*Church History*)
- h. *Desiring God* – John Piper (*Sanctification*)
- i. *The Pursuit of Holiness* - Jerry Bridges (*Sanctification*)
- j. *Let the Nations Be Glad* – John Piper (*Missions*)
- k. *Tell the Truth* – Will Metzger (*Evangelism*)