

Building Biblical Theology

Study Guide

LESSON
THREE

DIACHRONIC
DEVELOPMENTS IN THE
OLD TESTAMENT



THIRD MILLENNIUM

MINISTRIES

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STUDY GUIDE

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How to use this lesson and study guide

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Preparation** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule breaks** — Review the outline and the time codes to determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions in the outline.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Notes** — Use the Notes section to follow the lesson and to take additional notes. Many of the main ideas are already summarized in the notes, 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.
 - **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**
 - **Review Questions** — Questions on the basic content of the lesson. Answer review questions in the space provided. Review questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Application Questions** — 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.

Outline

- I. Introduction (0:28)
- II. Orientation (4:09)
 - A. Diachronic (4:40)
 - 1. Contrast (5:09)
 - 2. Interdependence (7:44)
 - B. Development (9:38)
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 - 2. Divine Providence (12:52)
 - C. Example (16:50)
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 - 1. Universal Covenants (25:44)
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 - 3. New Covenant (33:42)
 - B. Organic Unity (37:54)
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 - 2. Abiding Authority (40:43)
 - 3. Extended Application (44:12)
- IV. Topical Developments (48:51)
 - A. Traditional Topics (50:22)
 - B. Typology (55:09)
 - 1. Definition (56:28)
 - 2. Features (61:08)
 - 3. Identification (76:47)
- V. Conclusion (91:18)

Notes

I. Introduction

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

A. Diachronic

From Greek:

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

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

1. Contrast

- 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

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

1. Divine Purposes

Everything in history, including shifts in theology, always 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

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

- Expected
- Inexplicable
- Responsive

C. Example

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.

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

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

1. **Kingdom Administration**

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**

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.

3. Extended Application

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

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

A. Traditional Topics

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

1. Definition

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

Biblical theology 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

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

- Zerubabbel's temple

3. Identification

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

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?