



THE STORY OF SCRIPTURE

*An Introduction
to Biblical Theology*

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The Story of Scripture: An Introduction to Biblical Theology

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JESUS CHRIST

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*To Abigail, the joy of my heart;
and to Madelyn and Sophia, a double portion
of God's kindness toward me.*



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And I am eternally and fundamentally grateful to our Triune God, without whom I would still be blind to the truths of Scripture

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and deaf to its call to repent and believe in the incarnate, crucified-and-resurrected Son of God. I would be wandering in a story of my own making, a story without meaning and point. Instead, because of the graciousness of God in Christ, I am by the power of his Spirit finding my place in his story, the story of the world that finds its center in the person and work of Jesus.

About the Library

The Hobbs College Library equips Christians with tools for growing in the faith and for effective ministry. The library trains its readers in three major areas: Bible, theology, and ministry. The series originates from the Herschel H. Hobbs College of Theology and Ministry at Oklahoma Baptist University, where biblical, orthodox, and practical education lies at its core. Training the next generation was important for the great Baptist statesman Dr. Herschel H. Hobbs, and the Hobbs College that bears his name fosters that same vision.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: What Is Biblical Theology?

“The Bible contains sixty-six books written by more than forty authors, but is ultimately one book written by one author—God the Holy Spirit.”

This axiom, which you may have heard, is undoubtedly true. The Bible is one book written by one divine author, but God used many different human authors to do the writing. But when we ask *how exactly* the Bible fits together as one book, our agreement may begin to unravel. Is the Bible one book only because the Holy Spirit authored it all? Or is there some other way that it coheres together as one book? People have answered these questions differently through the centuries.

Biblical Theology and the Question of Unity

This question—how is the Bible one book?—is often answered through the tools of biblical theology. As a discipline, biblical theology exists to explain the unity and distinctions between the biblical

books. Over the past three centuries, biblical scholars have answered the question in a variety of ways. To get an understanding of how the Bible coheres as a unified book, let's look at a few ways people have understood "biblical theology."

Johannes Gabler's Project: Historical Development

The "father of biblical theology," Johannes P. Gabler, saw biblical theology as primarily *an historical task*. In his address to the University of Altdorff in 1787, Gabler made a distinction between biblical theology, inquiry concerned with the historical setting and religious function of particular biblical books and authors, and dogmatic theology, an ecclesial enterprise focused on the impact of the Bible on its contemporary readers.¹

For Gabler and those who followed him, particularly William Wrede, biblical theology is a purely historical, descriptive task—"what it meant"—while dogmatic, or systematic, theology is a constructive, prescriptive task—"what it means."² The former is done in the academy, the latter in the church. The former tends to be willing to depart from traditional Christian beliefs, while the latter is focused on reading the Bible in the context of the church's historic confessions.

¹ Johannes P. Gabler, "An Oration on the Proper Distinction Between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology and the Specific Objectives of Each," in *Old Testament Theology: Flowering and Future*, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study, ed. Ben C. Ollenburger (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004).

² For an introduction to William Wrede's thought, as well as to that of his contemporary opponent Adolf Schlatter, see Robert W. Morgan, *The Nature of New Testament Theology: The Contribution of William Wrede and Adolf Schlatter*, SBT 2.25 (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009). On the distinction between "what it meant" and "what it means" and particularly its use by Krister Stendahl, see the summary in Edward W. Klink and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 29–33.

In Gabler's model, then, biblical theology is an attempt to describe the religious beliefs of biblical authors and communities at the time a particular biblical book was written. Any unity between books or between the two testaments exists as a historical unity, one that arises because of historical continuity between religious communities. Unity is not a product of the continuity provided by divine inspiration of each biblical author, nor of a similar subject shared by each biblical author. Rather, unity is solely the product of one biblical author being historically situated in the same religious and theological stream as another biblical author. For many biblical theologians that follow Gabler, then, different streams and trajectories are within the Bible, some of which contradict one another.

Let me provide two examples of how this approach to biblical theology works out in practice. Among New Testament theologians it is popular to assert that a difference exists between the charismatic, imminent eschatological expectation of "authentically Pauline" letters like 1 Corinthians and the more settled, delayed eschatological expectation of "deutero-Pauline" letters such as 1 Timothy. Another example some give is the supposed contradiction between James's soteriology and Paul's soteriology in Romans. Now let me be clear: I do not find either of these conclusions to be justified! Still, this is one way this form of biblical theology works itself out. To be fair, I need to say this approach does not always end up with contradiction or discord. That would be to say too much because scholars such as Balla follow Gabler and Wrede's approach but do not find disunity in the biblical material.³ Nevertheless, any unity

³ For example, Peter Balla attempts a New Testament theology using Gabler and Wrede's approach but does so in such a way that he sees historical unity between the books of the New Testament. See his *Challenges to New Testament Theology*:

they find is historically situated and not explicitly tied to the nature of Scripture or its authorship.

Geerhardus Vos: Conceptual and Structural Unity

A second model of biblical theology pays attention to the divine authorship of Scripture and assumes a theological unity based on that fact. This model, typically traced to Geerhardus Vos,⁴ sees the two testaments tied together based on:

1. Scripture's Subject: Jesus Christ
2. Scripture's Story: the grand narrative from creation (Genesis 1) to new creation (Revelation 21)

While there are different articulations of this model and ways of demonstrating this unity, each of them share a recognition that the Bible is ultimately one coherent story, usually described as Creation-Fall-Redemption, that points to and culminates in the person and work of Jesus, the Son.

Developing from this overall structure Vos pioneered, there are at least three schools of thought on how this story fits together and how individual passages point to Christ, helpfully summarized by Klink and Lockett:⁵

1. The so-called *Dallas school* seeks to situate a passage in its historical context and ask what it says to Israel or the church

An Attempt to Justify the Enterprise, WUNT 2, Reihe 95 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

⁴ See Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975, 2012).

⁵ See Klink and Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology*, 59–75.

at that moment. While there is a recognition that the passage fits into the larger biblical story, there is reticence in this school to import any later developments of the passage into its original message.

2. The *Chicago school* also seeks to situate a passage in its historical context, but here there is also a willingness to see how the passage develops and furthers the biblical narrative. So, for instance, in Gen 3:15, the Chicago school would ask what the passage's original readers would have understood by it, as would the Dallas school. Rather than stopping there, as the Dallas school would, the Chicago school asks how that passage develops and is fulfilled in the rest of the biblical story. There is a willingness to see how the text moves the biblical narrative forward.
3. The *Philadelphia school* asks not only about the passage's historical context but also its literary context. It wants to know everything the Dallas and Chicago school does, but it also asks (a) how the passage itself points to Christ and (b) how its canonical context informs the interpretation of the passage. In other words, while the Dallas school and Chicago school would be reticent to say that Gen 3:15 "is about" Jesus, the Philadelphia school would be willing to import the canonical development of the passage back into its message. In any case, each of these three approaches seeks to discern how a passage fits into not only its historical context but also its canonical literary context. In other words, they ask the question, "How does this passage fit into the big story of the whole Bible?" And, in the case of the Philadelphia school, a second question augments the first: "How does this passage point to the culmination of the biblical story, the person and work of Jesus Christ?"

From the section above, we can see how scholars have understood biblical theology and the unity of Scripture in the past 250 years or so. But what about in the early church? What about from the time before Gabler? When we look at that time period, we gain insight on the church's view of biblical theology and Scriptural unity. The early church helps us to ask biblical theological questions related to the subject and structure of Scripture. And key to our understanding is the figure of Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons.

Biblical Theology and the Early Church

Irenaeus, a second-century apologist and theologian, argued that we should read the Bible with at least three things in mind.⁶ First, we ought to read Scripture with its *hypothesis* in view. Irenaeus used this term to indicate there is a main idea—the person and work of Jesus Christ—to which each passage in the Bible points. To help his readers understand this term, Irenaeus employed the analogy of a mosaic—a portrait made of different pieces of stained glass. For us today the corresponding analogy might be of a puzzle. In both a mosaic and a puzzle, the many pieces could be put together in any number of ways. Only when we have access to the plan for the mosaic, or the puzzle box top, do we know how to put the pieces together properly.

For Irenaeus, the mosaic pieces are supposed to be put together in such a way that they show readers of Scripture the handsome King, Jesus Christ. To put it in puzzle terms, the box top shows us that the pieces fit together to form a picture of Jesus. As we read

⁶ On Irenaeus's interpretive method and these three terms, see John O'Keefe and R. R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 34–44.

with the hypothesis in mind, then, our goal is always to find how a particular puzzle piece, or scriptural passage, fits into the larger puzzle that shows us Jesus Christ.

Irenaeus employed two other tools to assist in seeing how particular passages point to Christ. The first, *economy*, seeks to understand how a text fits into the structure of the Bible. Particularly important for Irenaeus is the recognition of the shape of the biblical story, a shape that culminates in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of the God-Man, Jesus Christ. Much like Vos almost two millennia later, Irenaeus asks how particular texts of Scripture fit into the larger story of the Bible, and especially how those texts point forward or backward to Scripture's climax found in the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth.

In seeking to understand how texts fit into the grand narrative of Scripture, Irenaeus employed a final hermeneutical tool, what he called *recapitulation*. For Irenaeus, each story in the Bible finds its culmination in the person and work of Jesus Christ, not only in terms of historical progression but in terms of typology. For instance, while the story of Abram and Sarai progresses the biblical narrative in terms of the covenant God makes with them and the line of the seed continuing through Isaac, both of which ultimately progress to the person and work of Jesus, it is not merely their place in the history of redemption that points to Jesus. For Irenaeus, the actual details of each biblical story are patterned after and point to the one main story, the story of Jesus in the Gospels. As an example, Sarai's barrenness and miraculous conception point forward to both Elizabeth's barrenness and miraculous conception of John the Baptist and to Mary's miraculous conception of Jesus.

Biblical Theology and the Bible's Unity

While current practitioners in the stream of Vos's biblical theology may not agree with every tool Irenaeus uses, the conclusions he makes, or even the manner in which he describes either his tools or his conclusions, there are affinities between this early church interpreter and today's biblical theologians.

For example, G. K. Beale emphasizes the story of the Bible, seeing how each passage fits into that story, intertextuality (how certain texts quote or allude to previous texts), and how a particular passage in the Old Testament may both historically and conceptually progress toward the person and work of Jesus.⁷ Beale refers to his method as organic, in that Old Testament texts are like seeds that flower out. As we read these Old Testament texts, we follow their progression through other, later Old Testament passages that all eventually find their culmination and fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Likewise, biblical theologians like Peter Leithart⁸ and Scott Hahn⁹ see an abundance of narrative patterns—what Irenaeus called recapitulation and what we commonly refer to as typology—that find their culmination and fulfillment in Israel's Messiah. So, while Irenaeus's terms may not be used with much frequency today, and while there is variety within Vos's stream of biblical theology, again we can say that what holds this approach together is an attempt to read each passage and book of Scripture within its larger narrative

⁷ For a fuller articulation of this method, see G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 1–29.

⁸ See, for example, Peter Leithart, *A Son to Me: An Exposition of 1 & 2 Samuel* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 2003).

⁹ See Scott Hahn, *The Kingdom of God as Liturgical Empire: A Theological Commentary on 1 & 2 Chronicles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012).

context and as pointing to the climax of the biblical story, Jesus Christ:

- The unity of the Bible is found in its structure—the grand narrative of Scripture—and its subject—the incarnate Christ.
- This unity is grounded in what the Bible is. It is the Spirit-inspired, Son-centered, Father-revealing Word of God.

The Bible's Theological Unity

In other words, the Bible is ultimately one book given by one author for one purpose. The Bible is a trinitarian book. Scripture is given by the Father to reveal the Son by the power of the Spirit. In this way, it is “trinitarian.” God has given Scripture to his people in the context of the covenant of salvation he has made with them. God gives Scripture to us so we might know him. The Bible is written to reveal the God of the universe to us. Its purpose is to make the one God, Yahweh, known to his people, his people who have been redeemed through his covenant-keeping work.

When we think about the Bible, then, we need to come to it understanding the context in which it is given and the purpose for which it is given. The Spirit inspires Scripture in the context of God's work of salvation, and he does so in order that his people might know how to come to him and know him fully. The Bible is not just an instruction manual, although it certainly gives instructions; it is not just a guide for moral living, although it certainly addresses morality; and it is not just an anthology of disparate stories, only connected by the front and back cover. The Bible is a covenant book, given to God's covenant people so they might know him fully.

The Bible's Trinitarian Shape

The triune God makes himself known specifically through the person of God the Son. Therefore, the Bible is not only about God generally, or about the Father in some places, the Son in some places, and the Spirit in some places. Instead, God chooses to reveal himself particularly through the person of the Son.¹⁰ This has to do with how the Trinity works in creation and redemption. God the Father works and is known through God the Son, who works and is known by God the Holy Spirit. When we think about the Bible, then, we need to think about it along the lines of the trinitarian God.

If God gives us the Bible to make himself known to us, how does he accomplish that as one God in three persons? We begin by acknowledging that God the Holy Spirit inspires Scripture (2 Tim 3:16–17). But he inspires it to what end? Jesus tells us that the Spirit's role in revelation is to testify to the Son (John 17:14; 2 Cor 3:17–18). As the Spirit inspires the writers of Scripture, then, he is continually pointing toward the Son, and particularly to the person and work of the incarnate Son, Jesus of Nazareth. We can and should, therefore, say that the entire Bible points to Christ (cf. Luke 16:29–31; 24:27,44; John 5:39,46). And the reason that this is so, the reason that the Spirit testifies to the Son, is it is through seeing and knowing the Son that we see and know the Father. “He who has seen me has seen the Father,” says Jesus (John 14:9; also 12:45; cf. 6:45–46; 8:19; 14:7). Further, the writer of Hebrews tells us the ultimate revelation of the Father comes through the Son (1:2), who

¹⁰ On the trinitarian shape of Scripture, both in terms of its narrative Christological climax and its Christocentric revelation of the triune God, see Scott R. Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and its Interpretation* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), esp. 15–60.

is “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature” (1:3 ESV). If we want to see the Father, we look at the Son. Because we cannot see Jesus face to face until we meet him either in paradise or at his return, we must know him through that which testifies to him—the Bible.

Therefore, we know the Son through the Scriptures, which the Spirit inspired. To say that the Bible is about God is to say that it testifies to the Son by the Spirit so that we might know and see the Father. Saying that the Bible is about Jesus is not to say that it is *only* about Jesus and not about the Father or Spirit, but to say that we know the Father through knowing the Son, whom we know through the Scriptures inspired by the Spirit.¹¹

One Subject and One Story

This brings us back to the two aspects of Scripture that unite the Bible’s sixty-six books into one book—its subject matter and its structure. The subject matter is Jesus, and we see how passages point to Jesus through understanding their place in the structure of Scripture. The next two chapters will articulate the broad structure of the Bible, or the grand narrative of Scripture, but for now we can summarize it as Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration (or New Creation).¹² The Bible begins with God’s creation of the world and

¹¹ On this trinitarian unity via Christological focus, see also Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1991), 29–80.

¹² On this outline, see, for example, Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004); Tim Chester, *From Creation to New Creation: Making Sense of the Whole Bible Story*, 2nd ed. (Purcellville, VA: The Good Book Company,

its fall into sin through Adam and Eve, and then the rest of Scripture is taken up with the story of God's plan to redeem the cosmos. Situating a particular passage within this big picture is vital to biblical theology and biblical interpretation.

In addition to this narrative context, a number of concepts will assist us in seeing how and why structure is important to biblical theology. We begin with *recapitulation*, a word we have already seen in this chapter. Commonly known as *typology*,¹³ recapitulation demonstrates a structural unity to the Bible and its story through patterns of smaller stories. These repetitive, smaller stories build up and point to the climax of the one big story of the Bible, the person and work of Jesus. So, for instance, the Joseph story is repeated throughout the Old Testament, particularly in the stories of Mordecai and Daniel.¹⁴ Like Joseph, Mordecai and Daniel flee from sin, are exiled in Gentile kingdoms, and rise to second in command of those kingdoms. Mordecai, like Joseph, is clothed in the image of the king and is paraded through the capital city; Daniel, like Joseph, is able to interpret dreams. Joseph, in turn, is pictured as a new Adam: one who is clothed in the image of the king; is second in command to the king; rules over the land given by the king; is given a wife by the king; is fruitful and multiplies; and, unlike Adam, is

2010); Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 80–236; and Vaughn Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003).

¹³ For an introduction to typology, see Francis Foulkes, "The Acts of God: A Study of the Basis of Typology in the Old Testament," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 342–74; and Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 170–89.

¹⁴ I owe this insight, along with many others, to Dr. Robert L. Cole, formerly associate professor of Old Testament and Semitics at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) in Wake Forest, NC.

wise, discerning between good and evil. There is a repeated pattern, in other words, from Adam to Joseph to Daniel to Mordecai. This repeated pattern, in turn, points to and finds its culmination in the coming Messiah, Jesus, who is the image of God, the exact representation of his being (Heb 1:3; i.e., Jesus is *clothed* in the image of God), able to discern between good and evil (Matthew 4), fruitful and multiplies through his Spirit in the Church's testimony (Acts 1:8), and rules over all things (Eph 1:20; Col 1:15–17). Jesus, the Second Adam, is the culmination of the pattern of the First Adam found in the Old Testament.

Related to this repetition of stories with the Bible is another key concept, *intertextuality*.¹⁵ This term refers to passages that quote or allude to previous passages of Scripture. In the example of typology above, not only do the patterns of the stories match, but the authors of those different books quote or allude to the similar stories in previous books. So, Mordecai's story looks like Joseph's story, but the author of Esther goes beyond narrative parallels and actually quotes from Genesis 37–50. Likewise, the Joseph story quotes and alludes back to Genesis 1–2 in portraying Joseph like a new Adam. This kind of textual unity occurs throughout the Bible, in both testaments. The human authors of Scripture were inspired by the divine Author to connect their books to other books of the Bible on a textual level. We should, therefore, pay attention to how particular verses repeat or allude to other verses of Scripture. Further, we should pay attention to how these textual connections help us to see the Bible's structural and conceptual unity. Many times these intertextual connections are related to one or both of those. So, for instance, the

¹⁵ For an introduction to the concept of intertextuality, see John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 212–13.

parallels between Adam and Joseph, and then between Joseph and Daniel and Mordecai, help us to see the typological, structural unity of those stories, which in turn points us to Scripture's conceptual unity in that all of them point forward to Jesus.

A fourth important concept that helps us to see the Bible's structural unity is that of *covenant*.¹⁶ The whole Bible is tied together through the covenants God makes with his people. The one covenant of salvation God makes progresses throughout the Old Testament and culminates with the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus. So, after humanity's fall into sin:

1. God makes a covenant with Adam to crush Satan through the seed of woman.
2. He then makes a covenant with Noah not to destroy the earth before that redemption is accomplished (Genesis 6–9).
3. Next, he makes a covenant with Abram to bring the Messiah through his line and to make Abram a great nation (Israel) (Genesis 12; 15; 17; and 22).
4. After the Exodus, he makes a covenant with Israel regarding the land and the law (Exodus 19–23).
5. During David's reign, God promises him that David's son will sit on his throne forever and that he will build God's house (2 Samuel 7).
5. And through the prophets God promises that, in the new covenant, Israel, exiled and scattered, will one day be restored and receive God's Spirit so that they can follow God's instruction and live under his reign, forever (Jeremiah 31–33).

¹⁶ On the Bible's covenantal structure, see Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

We will discuss the unity of these covenants, and the unique conditional nature of the Mosaic covenant, in a later chapter. For now, we simply want to note that these covenants tie the different parts of the Old Testament together and progress the entire Old Testament toward their fulfillment in Christ.

Finally, in addition to these narrative, textual, covenantal, and typological connective tissues, the Old and New Testament canons are structured in such a way that points to the Bible's unity. When we think about the Old Testament's structure, and particularly the order of the books in it, our English Bibles put the prophets at the end. This certainly helps us to see that the entire Old Testament ultimately points to Christ—it ends with prophetic hope about the coming Messiah.

But the order of the books in the Hebrew Bible, which differs significantly from our English Bibles, demonstrates an eschatological messianic hope as well.¹⁷ In the Hebrew Bible, the Law (Genesis–Deuteronomy) comes first, followed by the Prophets, both Former (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings) and Latter (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea–Malachi). Finally, the Hebrew Bible ends with the Writings (Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra–Nehemiah, Chronicles). As you can see, this order differs significantly from our English order. But there are narrative, textual connections that help us to see this order as pointing forward to the Messiah as well. The most important of these is the fact that at end of the Law (Deuteronomy 34), the beginning and end of the Prophets (Joshua 1 and Malachi 4), and the beginning of the Writings (Psalm 1), there are intertextual

¹⁷ For an introduction to the Bible's shape, see my *Christ and the New Creation: A Canonical Approach to the Theology of the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013).

connections that tie each of these three sections together.¹⁸ These are typically referred to as “seams,” and if you were to go read each of those passages, you’d notice that all four of them are looking for a prophet greater than Moses, a wise king who will lead God’s people into the promised land. In other words, each of the three sections of the Hebrew Bible is waiting for the same person. It evokes the same eschatological messianic hope that our English order has by ending with the prophets.

Conclusion

It might be helpful to picture Scripture by using a few different metaphors. One is the puzzle metaphor Irenaeus discussed. Another might be to see the Bible as an intricate quilt. The different stories and passages are different patches on the quilt, while the intertextual links are the seams in between them. Further, this quilt is made in such a way that all these patches move on the quilt toward one central patch, the patch that shows us the incarnate Christ. Or, to put it like Irenaeus, the whole puzzle is a picture of Jesus. The different pieces are the different stories and passages of the biblical books. The lines that fit together are the textual and narrative links between them. Whatever metaphor we use, the point is the same: the whole Bible is one book inspired by one author with one story that culminates in one person, the God-Man Jesus Christ. Biblical theology is

¹⁸ On the connection between Deuteronomy 34 and Malachi 4, see Stephen B. Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets: A Study in the Old Testament Canon Formation*, FAT 27, ed. Bernd Janowski and Herman Spieckermann (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2000), 112. On all four seams mentioned and their textual connections, see Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 101.

the attempt to read the Bible in this structurally and conceptually unified fashion.

For the purposes of this book, while we will come back to the metaphors of the quilt and the puzzle, the dominant metaphor on which I will rely is that of a topographical map. These kinds of maps show you the whole terrain—you can see where you are, where you are going, and what kind of routes you can take to get there. But it also shows you the individual regions, the smaller areas of the map that, put together, make up the larger whole. As well, biblical theology gives us both of these—the big picture of the whole Bible *and* how its individual parts fit into that larger whole. Michael Horton says it this way:

Like a topographical map, biblical theology draws all of the strands together to help us see the organic development of revelation and redemption from election to glorification. We see the high peaks, low valleys, rivers, and plains that lead from promise to fulfillment. Biblical theology rivets our attention to the historical development of various themes . . . the “many times” and “many ways” in which “God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days . . . by his Son” (Heb 1:1–2).¹⁹

¹⁹ Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 28. For this geographical and traveling analogy, also see Mark J. Boda, “Biblical Theology and Old Testament Interpretation,” pp. 122–54 in *Hearing the Old Testament: Listening for God’s Address*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew and David J. H. Beldman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 135–47.

Biblical theology, then, helps us to see the end goal of the biblical narrative—Jesus—as well as how its different parts fit into that one main Christological pathway of Scripture.

In the remainder of this book, we will walk through the basics of that kind of reading, first by telling the whole story of the Bible, from Creation to New Creation, and then by noting a number of key structural and thematic ties between the different parts of Scripture. Ultimately, our goal is to see how the Bible fits together as one book about one person, Jesus Christ, God the Son in human flesh.