

# A Biblical Theology Of The Church

A Biblical Theology Of The Church A Biblical Theology of the Church A biblical theology of the church seeks to understand the nature, purpose, and identity of the church as revealed throughout Scripture. It explores how God's plan for His people unfolds from Genesis through Revelation, emphasizing the continuity and development of God's redemptive work in and through the church. This approach recognizes the church not merely as an institution or social gathering but as a divine creation rooted in God's eternal purpose, grounded in Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. By examining key biblical themes, covenants, and the narrative flow of Scripture, a biblical theology of the church provides clarity on its divine origin, its mission, and its future hope.

**The Biblical Foundations of the Church**

**Old Testament Roots and Covenants** The concept of God's people begins early in Scripture, with foundational promises and covenants that foreshadow the church's New Testament fulfillment.

**The Covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12, 15, 17):** God promises to make Abraham's descendants a great nation, bless them, and bless all nations through them. This covenant establishes the idea of a chosen people connected to God's purpose in salvation history.

**The Sinai Covenant (Exodus 19–24):** The giving of the Law at Mount Sinai formalizes Israel as God's covenant community, called to live in obedience and holiness as a witness to the nations.

**The Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7):** God's promise to establish David's throne forever points to the coming Messiah, who will reign over God's people eternally. These covenants reveal God's plan to form a people for Himself, setting the stage for the New Testament understanding of the church as the continuation and fulfillment of these promises.

**Prophetic and Wisdom Literature**

**The prophets frequently speak of a future gathering of God's people and the renewal of the covenant community.**

**Isaiah's Vision of Restoration (Isaiah 2, 11, 42):** Foretells a future where God's house is established as a house of prayer for all nations, emphasizing inclusivity and 2 universal worship.

**Ezekiel's Vision of the Temple and the Spirit (Ezekiel 40–48):** Illustrates the renewal of Israel through a future temple and the outpouring of God's Spirit, prefiguring the New Testament church.

**Wisdom Literature (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes):** Emphasizes living in covenant obedience and the pursuit of righteousness, foundational for understanding the moral and spiritual life of God's people. These texts lay the groundwork for understanding the church as God's new covenant community, rooted in the promises and hopes expressed by the prophets.

**The New Testament Revelation of the Church**

**Jesus Christ as the Foundation** The New Testament reveals Jesus Christ as the central figure in God's redemptive plan and the

foundation of His church. The Gospel of Matthew (16:18): Jesus declares, “I will build my church,” explicitly establishing the church’s divine origin and purpose. The Incarnation and Ministry of Jesus: Jesus’ teachings, miracles, death, and resurrection inaugurate the new covenant community, embodying the fulfillment of Old Testament promises. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20): Jesus commands His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them, defining the church’s mission. The church’s foundation is rooted in Christ’s person and work, making Him the head and cornerstone of the community. The Church as the New Covenant Community The writings of Paul, Peter, and other apostles elucidate the church’s identity as the spiritual body of Christ. Paul’s Letters (Ephesians 1–3, 4–6): Emphasize unity in Christ, the church as the body with Christ as the head, and the believers’ new identity in the Spirit. 1 Peter 2:9–10: Describes believers as a chosen race, royal priesthood, and a holy nation—echoing Old Testament language but now fulfilled in Christ. The Sacraments: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper serve as visible signs of inclusion in the church and participation in Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. The church is thus a spiritual fellowship called out of the world, united by faith in Christ and empowered by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit and the Formation of the Church The Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in establishing, guiding, and empowering the church. Pentecost (Acts 2): The Spirit’s outpouring marks the birth of the church and enables believers to witness boldly. The Spirit’s Role: Convicts of sin, unites believers, bestows spiritual gifts, and guides the church’s mission and doctrine (John 14–16). Paul’s Teaching (1 Corinthians 12): Emphasizes the diversity of gifts within the church, all empowered by the Spirit for the common good. The Spirit’s presence confirms the church’s divine authority and ongoing mission. The Mission and Purpose of the Church in Scripture The Great Commission and the Gospel’s Spread The church’s primary calling is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations. Make Disciples: Evangelize, baptize, and teach obedience (Matthew 28:19–20).1. Exalt Christ: Worship and glorify God in all aspects of life.2. Transform Society: Live out the kingdom values of justice, mercy, and humility.3. This mission is rooted in the biblical narrative of redemption and is the continuation of Christ’s earthly ministry. The Church’s Visible and Invisible Dimensions The biblical understanding of the church encompasses both its visible and invisible aspects. Visible Church: The gathered community of believers, local churches, and their organized ministries. Invisible Church: The spiritual fellowship of all true believers across time and space, known only to God. This dual perspective underscores that while the church is tangible and visible in history, its ultimate reality is rooted in the spiritual union of all believers in Christ. The Eschatological Hope of the Church 4 The Church in the New Heaven and New Earth Biblical theology affirms that the church’s ultimate destiny is eternal communion with God. Revelation 21–22: Describes the new heaven and new earth where God dwells with His people, and the

church experiences perfect communion, worship, and righteousness. The Marriage of Christ and the Church (Revelation 19:7–9): Portrays the church as the bride prepared for Christ, emphasizing intimacy and eternal union. This future hope motivates the church's present mission and perseverance amid trials. The Consummation of God's Kingdom The biblical narrative culminates in the full realization of God's eternal kingdom, where the church will dwell forever in the presence of God, free from sin and suffering. The Final Resurrection and Judgment: Believers are raised to eternal life, and evil is finally defeated. The Eternal State: The church exists in a renewed creation, worshiping God in a perfect, unblemished community. This eschatological hope sustains the church's identity as a redeemed community called to live in anticipation of Christ's return. Conclusion: A Biblical Theology of the Church A biblical theology of the church reveals it as a divine institution rooted in God's covenant promises, fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. From its Old Testament foundations to its eschatological hope, the church is portrayed as the ongoing community of God's redeemed people—called to worship, witness, and serve in accordance with God's eternal purpose. Understanding the church biblically encourages believers to see their participation as part of God's grand redemptive plan, fostering unity, holiness, and mission. Ultimately, the biblical vision of the church is one of hope and anticipation, awaiting the full realization of God's eternal kingdom where His people will dwell with Him forever in restored glory. Question Answer What is the biblical foundation for understanding the church's identity? The biblical foundation for the church's identity is rooted in the New Testament, where the church is described as the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:25-27), and the household of God (Ephesians 2:19). These images emphasize the church's spiritual unity, sacrificial love, and familial relationship with God. 5 How does biblical theology define the mission of the church? Biblical theology defines the church's mission as making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20), proclaiming the gospel, and embodying Christ's love through service and justice. It emphasizes obedience to God's commands and participating in God's redemptive work on earth. What role does the Holy Spirit play in the biblical understanding of the church? The Holy Spirit is essential in the biblical understanding of the church as He indwells believers, empowering worship, guiding doctrine, and uniting diverse believers into one body. The Spirit also equips the church for mission and sanctification (Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:13). How does biblical theology describe the relationship between Israel and the church? Biblical theology sees the church as the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel, with continuity and discontinuity. The church is viewed as the spiritual Israel, inheriting the promises through faith in Christ, while also recognizing the distinct roles and covenants of Israel and the church (Romans 9-11). What is the significance of the church's sacraments or ordinances in biblical theology? In biblical theology,

sacraments like baptism and the Lord's Supper are vital symbols that affirm the church's identity in Christ, signify initiation into the community, and serve as means of grace that nurture faith and unity among believers (Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). How does biblical theology guide the understanding of church worship and community life? Biblical theology emphasizes that worship and community life should be centered on glorifying God through Spirit-led praise, prayer, and teaching of the Word. It advocates for a community characterized by love, humility, spiritual growth, and mutual accountability, reflecting Christ's character (Colossians 3:16-17; Hebrews 10:24-25). A biblical theology of the church offers a rich and comprehensive understanding of what the church is according to Scripture. It explores how the concept of the church develops through the unfolding narrative of the Bible, revealing God's purpose, mission, and plan for His people. By grounding this theology in Scripture, believers gain clarity on their identity, responsibilities, and hope as members of Christ's body. This article will delve into the biblical foundations of the church, examining its origins, nature, mission, and future promises, providing readers with a nuanced yet accessible overview rooted firmly in biblical teaching.

**What Is a Biblical Theology of the Church?** A biblical theology of the church involves studying the church as it is depicted throughout the entire biblical narrative—from Genesis to Revelation. It seeks to understand the church not merely as a human institution but as God's divine creation, woven into His redemptive plan. This approach emphasizes the unity of Scripture, highlighting how each part contributes to a coherent picture of God's people. Fundamentally, biblical theology of the church answers questions such as:

- How does Scripture define the church?
- What is the church's origin and purpose?
- How does the church relate to Christ and God's overarching plan?
- What are the characteristics and responsibilities of the church today?
- What is the church's ultimate destiny?

To grasp the biblical theology of the church, it is essential to trace key themes and passages that reveal its foundational truths.

**The Origins of the Church in Scripture**

**The Church in the Old Testament: Shadows and Promises** Though the explicit term "church" (from the Greek *ekklesia*) appears predominantly in the New Testament, the Old Testament lays important groundwork. The foundational idea is that God's people have always been called to be a distinct community set apart for Him. Key Old Testament themes include:

- **The People of Israel:** The nation of Israel served as God's chosen community, called to embody His covenant and demonstrate His holiness to the nations (Exodus 19:5-6). They were to be a light to the nations, pointing forward to a more inclusive spiritual community.
- **The Covenant:** God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12, 15, 17) established a people through whom His blessing would flow. This covenant foreshadowed the universal scope of the church.
- **The Tabernacle and Temple:** These physical structures symbolized God's presence dwelling among His people,

emphasizing communal worship and divine fellowship (Exodus 25-31). While the Old Testament primarily describes Israel as God's chosen community, it also contains prophetic promises pointing forward to a future, more complete community—what would eventually be fulfilled in Christ. The Church in the New Testament: The Fulfillment and Expansion The New Testament marks the decisive moment where the biblical concept of the church is explicitly revealed. Jesus Christ inaugurates the new community of His followers, emphasizing both continuity and fulfillment of Old Testament promises. Key New Testament passages include: - Matthew 16:18: Jesus declares, "I will build my church," establishing His authority and the foundation of His people. - Acts 2: The day of Pentecost marks the birth of the church as the Holy Spirit is poured out on believers, uniting Jews and Gentiles into one body. - Ephesians 1:22-23: Paul describes the church as the body of Christ, with Christ as its head. - 1 Peter 2:9: Believers are called a "royal priesthood," emphasizing their communal identity and spiritual authority. In essence, the New Testament reveals the church as the culmination of God's redemptive work, expanding beyond Israel to include all nations. The Nature and Identity of the Church The Church as the Body of Christ One of the most profound biblical images of the church is that of the body—Christ's body. This metaphor emphasizes unity, diversity, dependence, and purpose. - Unity: All believers are connected to Christ and to each other (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). - Diversity: Different members have different gifts, roles, and functions (Romans 12:4-8). - Dependence: Just as the body relies on its parts, the church depends on Christ and mutual interdependence. - Purpose: The body exists to serve Christ's mission—evangelism, discipleship, and worship. This biblical image underscores that the church is not merely an organization but a living organism characterized by spiritual life and divine purpose. The Church as the People of God The biblical concept of the church also includes being "the people of God," a term rooted in the Old Testament but fully realized in Christ. - Adopted as Children: Believers are adopted into God's family through A Biblical Theology Of The Church 7 faith in Christ (Galatians 4:4-7). - Covenantal Community: The church lives under the new covenant, marked by grace, forgiveness, and the Spirit's indwelling (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:10-12). - Universal and Local: The church is both universal (all believers across time and space) and local (congregations and communities). The Marks of a True Church Scripture also provides criteria for identifying a faithful church: - Preaching of the Word: The faithful proclamation of Scripture (2 Timothy 4:2). - Right Sacraments: Proper administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper (Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). - Discipline and Holiness: Maintaining spiritual discipline and moral integrity (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Timothy 3:15). - Fellowship and Love: Genuine community marked by love and mutual care (John 13:34-35). The Mission of the Church in Biblical Perspective The Great Commission At the heart of the church's mission is the Great Commission, as recorded

in Matthew 28:18-20: > “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” This directive emphasizes: - Evangelism: proclaiming the gospel to all nations. - Discipleship: nurturing new believers. - Baptism and Teaching: initiating and instructing followers in obedience. The Mission as Part of God’s Redemptive Plan The church’s mission is not an add-on but integral to God’s purpose. It includes: - Worship: Glorifying God through adoration and obedience. - Holiness: Reflecting Christ’s character in personal and communal life. - Justice: Acting justly and caring for the oppressed (Isaiah 1:17; Micah 6:8). - Cultural Engagement: Transforming society through the gospel (Matthew 5:13-16). The Spirit’s Role in Mission The Holy Spirit empowers the church for its mission: - Guides believers into truth (John 16:13). - Equips with spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). - Convicts and draws people to Christ (John 16:8). The Future of the Church: Eschatological Hope The Church’s Ultimate Destiny Biblical theology affirms that the church’s future is rooted in the promises of Scripture: - The Marriage Supper of the Lamb: Revelation 19:6-9 depicts the church as the bride of Christ, united with Him in eternal fellowship. - New Heaven and New Earth: Revelation 21-22 describes the consummation of God’s kingdom, where the church dwells with God in perfect harmony. The Church’s Role in the Eschaton The church will participate in God’s final act of redemption: - Resurrection Bodies: Believers will be raised immortal (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). - Eternal Worship: The community will worship God fully and forever (Revelation 7:9-17). - Renewed Creation: The earth will be restored and transformed, serving as the eternal home of God’s people. Conclusion: Living Out a Biblical Theology of the Church A biblical theology of the church reveals it as a divine community rooted in Christ, called to embody His life and mission in the world. It is both a present reality—spiritually alive and engaged in service—and a future hope, awaiting the full realization of God’s kingdom. Understanding this biblical foundation equips believers to live faithfully, participate actively in the church’s mission, and anticipate the glorious future that God has prepared. By anchoring our understanding in Scripture, we recognize A Biblical Theology Of The Church 8 that the church is not merely a human institution but a divine assembly—God’s chosen instrument for His redemptive purposes. As members of Christ’s body, we are called to embody love, pursue holiness, and advance the gospel until Christ returns in glory. church history, ecclesiology, salvation, covenant, New Testament, Old Testament, divine nature, community, sacraments, mission

A Biblical Theology of the Church  
Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments  
Biblical Theology  
Biblical Theology of the New Testament  
The Reality of Biblical Theology  
Biblical Theology of the New Testament  
Introducing Biblical Theology  
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TheologyThe Heart of Biblical TheologyThe King in His BeautyUnderstanding Biblical TheologyThe Concept of Biblical TheologyThe Biblical Theology of the New TestamentBiblical Theology of the Holy SpiritBiblical Theology of the New Testament ...WorkWhat Is Biblical Theology?Biblical Theology of the Old TestamentThe Politics of Biblical Theology Mal Couch Brevard S. Childs John Goldingay Bernhard Weiss Mark W. Elliott Christian Friedrich Schmid Sigurd Grindheim Roy Zuck Adolf Schlatter Dr Mark W Elliott Thomas R. Schreiner Edward W Klink III James Barr Ezra Palmer Gould Trevor J. Burke Bernhard Weiss R. Keith Loftin James M. Hamilton Revere Franklin Weidner David Penchansky

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now in paperback this extensive resource examines the doctrine of the church and offers guidance on mission pastoral care leadership and government in the local church numerous scripture references practical suggestions and discussion questions for every chapter make this work on ecclesiology perfect for both personal and group study

this monumental work is the first comprehensive biblical theology to appear in many years and is the culmination of brevard child s lifelong commitment to constructing a biblical theology that surmounts objections to the discipline raised over the past generation childs rejects any approaches that overstress either the continuity or discontinuity between the old and new testaments he refuses to follow the common pattern in christian thought of identifying biblical theology with the new testament s interest in the old rather childs maps out an approach that reflects on the whole christian bible with its two very different voices each of which retains continuing integrity and is heard on its own terms

john goldingay takes the new testament as a portal into the complete canon of

scripture without searching out an overarching unity he allows scripture's diversity and tensions to remain letting scripture speak to us in its own voice this landmark biblical theology is hermeneutically dexterous biblically expansive and nourishing to mind soul and proclamation

this book demonstrates a number of approaches made by biblical scholars to find a theology of the christian scripture it then considers attempts to bridge the gap between exegesis and dogmatics by appeal to the discipline of fundamental theology and the doctrine of revelation it finds that for all the interesting questions raised one is forced back to the bible from where one must form the themes and concepts which have been developed by theologians through the ages and which with help from biblical historical critics can be made to refresh theology and serve the church this is done by examining the role of faith in the two testaments and by considering how the bible's understanding of that which receives revelation is itself useful for the total enterprise of theology

this book teaches students how to make sense of the christian bible as a unity in the context of the story of jesus

explore god's truth as it unfolded chronologically companion volume to a biblical theology of the old testament

robert morgan's classic work on the nature of new testament theology including his translations of william wrede's the task and method of new testament theology and adolf schlatter's the theology of the new testament and dogmatics

providing a model of how to do biblical theology this book also explores important emerging trends over the last five years including reception history as a means to grasping the theology of the bible theological interpretation as a new form of lectio divina meditative reading the place of jewish interpretation in forming a biblical theology and the ever present problem of losing old testament theology in new testament theology the second half of the book discusses the theme of providence as found in both testaments with insights gained from the history of biblical interpretation and from major attempts at working out a theology of providence elliot focuses on providence as it has been perceived rather than the themes of god's goodness and powerfulness in themselves

thomas schreiner a respected scholar and a trusted voice for many students and pastors offers a substantial and accessibly written overview of the whole bible he traces the storyline of the scriptures from the standpoint of biblical theology



examining the overarching message that is conveyed throughout schreiner emphasizes three interrelated and unified themes that stand out in the biblical narrative god as lord human beings as those who are made in god s image and the land or place in which god s rule is exercised the goal of god s kingdom is to see the king in his beauty and to be enraptured in his glory

understanding biblical theology clarifies the catch all term biblical theology a movement that tries to remove the often held dichotomy between biblical studies for the church and as an academic pursuit this book examines the five major schools of thought regarding biblical theology and handles each in turn defining and giving a brief developmental history for each one and exploring each method through the lens of one contemporary scholar who champions it using a spectrum between history and theology each of five types of biblical theology are identified as either more theological or more historical in concern and practice biblical theology as historical description james barr biblical theology as history of redemption d a carson biblical theology as worldview story n t wright biblical theology as canonical approach brevard child s biblical theology as theological construction francis watson a conclusion suggests how any student of the bible can learn from these approaches

james barr offers critical insight on the craft of writing first testament theologies he also critically reviews the work of numerous significant biblical theologians including brevard child s and walter brueggemann in particular robert gnuse biblical theology bulletin anyone interested in biblical theology will find much here that is helpful and much for which to be grateful dj reimer journal for the study of the old testament the concept of biblical theology is the result of more than 25 years of teaching and writing and is barr s discussion of the whole idea of biblical theology its possibilities and its prospects he has made no attempt to survey all the theologies that have been written nor all the material that has been brought forward in the discussion but has selected persons and themes that have seemed fruitful for his own thinking many scholars believe the study of biblical theology to be in decline and barr has been a severe critic of tendencies in biblical theology in his time but here he guides the reader through the various supportive and opposing arguments providing his compelling conclusion that something of the nature of biblical theology remains necessary and that biblical scholarship would be much the poorer without it prior to retiring james barr was professor of hebrew bible emeritus at vanderbilt divinity school nashville his teaching career has also included professorships at edinburgh university princeton theological seminary manchester university and oxford university he has held visiting professorships and delivered major lecture series in europe the united states africa israel australia and new zealand

written by an international team of leading scholars this is the first comprehensive exploration of the role and work of the holy spirit as witnessed in both the old and new testaments with contributions by craig bartholomew gary burge david desilva james d g dunn david firth walter kaiser won suk ma john christopher thomas max turner and matthias wenk among others this authoritative survey will rapidly establish itself as a standard reference point for scholars and students of all theological persuasions any attempt at a biblical theology must begin with a careful exegesis of the biblical text to this end each contributor address the text through a rigorous exegesis of pertinent passages keeping in mind the genre canonical contexts and sweep of redemptive history

moving from biblical theology to systematic theology to practical theology work theological foundations and practical implications offers a comprehensive theology of work with contributions from a variety of leading theologians including miroslav volf and samuel gregg this book brings together biblical scholars ethicists economists representing a spectrum of theological voices it will bring a new academic depth to the literature on the theology of work and provide a comprehensive single volume resource for scholars and students alike

how do you read the bible the bible recounts a single story one that began at creation encompasses our lives today and will continue till christ s return and beyond in what is biblical theology jim hamilton introduces us to this narrative helping us understand the worldview of the biblical writers so that we can read the old and new testaments as those authors intended tracing the key patterns symbols and themes that bind the bible together this book will help you understand scripture s unified message and find your place in the great story of redemption

excerpt from biblical theology of the old testament biblical theology is one of the more recent branches of theology our older theologians did not distinguish between dogmatic and biblical theology during the whole development of church doctrine down to the middle of the present century no distinct line was drawn between the essential contents of revelation as they are laid down in the scriptures and the doctrinal formulas elaborated from them and still less were the successive stages of revelation and the types of doctrine which are presented in scripture recognized the bible was supposed to attest equally in the old and new testaments the truths which the church has accepted as doctrines the old testament being used in all its parts just like the new testament for proofs of doctrine but our modern theologians maintain that the old and new testament stand to each other in the relation of preparation and fulfilment that their unity must not be understood as identity that the old testament itself acknowledges that the manifestation of god s kingdom at that time was

imperfect and temporary that still more distinctly does the new testament emphasize the difference from the old which subsists within the unity of the two testaments that the eternal counsel of salvation although announced by the prophets is nevertheless not completely revealed till after its actual realization that the tuition of the law reached its goal in the grace and truth of christ that the unity of the old and new testament must not be conceived of as an identity of doctrine but as a gradually advancing process of development of doctrine that in setting forth the doctrines of the bible systematically we must recognize the general development which revelation passes through in scripture itself and that the old atomistic system of scripture proof must be superseded by one which shows that the truths of salvation formulated in doctrinal statements are the result of the whole process through which revelation has passed about the publisher forgotten books publishes hundreds of thousands of rare and classic books find more at forgottenbooks.com this book is a reproduction of an important historical work forgotten books uses state of the art technology to digitally reconstruct the work preserving the original format whilst repairing imperfections present in the aged copy in rare cases an imperfection in the original such as a blemish or missing page may be replicated in our edition we do however repair the vast majority of imperfections successfully any imperfections that remain are intentionally left to preserve the state of such historical works

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