

EXCERPT



Walking the Way of the Wise *A Biblical Theology of Wisdom*

June 3, 2025 | \$26.00, 192 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-1091-4

Mitchell L. Chase is associate professor of biblical studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and is preaching pastor at Kosmosdale Baptist Church. He is the author of *Short of Glory* (Crossway) and *Resurrection Hope and the Death of Death* (Crossway).

Wisdom Is Not Simply Knowledge

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” Someone probably asked you that question, more than once. It is fascinating to hear the dreams of being a professional athlete or an astronaut or a famous inventor. While I do not know the correspondence between a child’s answer and the actual adult vocation, I imagine that more often than not the child’s answer was different from what came to pass.

The question “What do you want to be?” is typically interpreted as vocational. When adults ask children that question, they mean it in a vocational sense. But let’s deepen the question and make it a bit longer: “What *kind of person* do you want to be when you grow up?” This question is good for children to think about, and it is good for adults too.

We are becoming certain kinds of people. Humans are not static beings. We grow, we are influenced by others, and we are affected by circumstances. You are not who you once were, and you are not who you will be. For Christians, the reality of change is even more profound. God has done a merciful work that has fundamentally changed us, and he is not finished. If we are in Christ, we are a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). This spiritual truth carries both earthly and eternal ramifications. We are inwardly being renewed (2 Cor 4:16), and our future is a weight of glory consisting of resurrection life (2 Cor 4:17–5:5). God has begun a good work in us, and he will bring it to completion (Phil 1:6).

God’s good work empowers Christian growth, and growing in Christ involves growing in wisdom. What do you want to be when you grow up? “Wise” is a great answer, maybe even the best answer. Wisdom in the biblical sense is more than street smarts. It is more than cleverness in a particular field. Biblical wisdom is the result of living in glad submission to God’s Word in God’s world. Biblical wisdom is believing what God has revealed and seeking to live in light of it.

Do you want to be wise? Do you want to understand what the biblical authors teach about this topic that affects your life at a deep level?

Biblical wisdom is a whole-Bible subject. This might surprise readers who think of wisdom as something that only a small number of Old and New Testament books address. If you were to ask which biblical books are about wisdom, a common answer would name Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. Three books. If someone named more books than these, they might add some psalms, the Song of Songs, and the letter of James, totaling six books. Now, it is true that these books teach wisdom, but what if biblical wisdom involves more than these six? What if we were open to wisdom as primarily a concept rather than primarily a genre? A genre is about similarities in form and style. And because the three—or six—books mentioned above contain things such as poetic structure, parallelisms, proverbial statements, and/or lengthy discourses instructing the recipients in wisdom, “Wisdom literature” is common language among scholars.

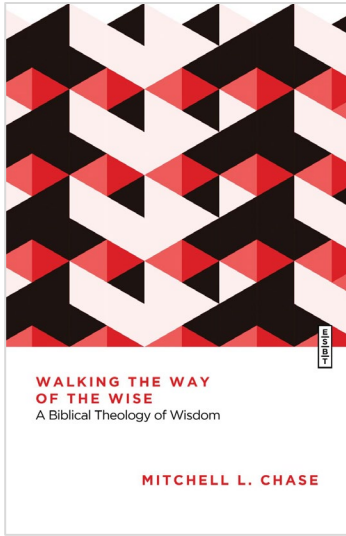
While noting a book’s genre(s) can shed interpretive light on the passages therein, a danger also exists. We should not use the concept of genre to exclude the presence of complex literary styles or features in a book. For instance, have you noticed that there are prophecies in Genesis, a book outside the so-called Prophets? Have you seen the narrative bookends of Job’s story, even though poetry is the dominant style in the intervening chapters?



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In order to understand what the biblical authors teach about wisdom, we must not limit our focus to the so-called Wisdom books. Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, and James are crucial books for the subject at hand, and we will engage them in due course, but biblical wisdom is a concern in the whole Bible. I am not arguing that everything in Scripture is wisdom; if everything is wisdom, then nothing is. But there are plenty of places outside the “Wisdom literature” that serve to instruct people in how to think and live in God’s world. In some passages that teach us how to live wisely, the word *wisdom* is not even used. Therefore, an effort to understand wisdom in the Bible must be more than a word study and more than a focus on a recognized set of books.

Is the phrase “Wisdom literature” worth retaining, especially if wisdom is better called a concept? Are there “wisdom books” in the Bible? Tremper Longman notes, “Genres are not rigid and pure. Texts do not have one and only one genre, but can be part of different literary groupings that illuminate the individual text. Genres have fuzzy boundaries. It is with this understanding of genre that we believe it is appropriate to describe a wisdom genre in the Bible.” What would be a key—or *the* key—element in identifying a so-called wisdom genre? Again, Longman: “The main identifier of the wisdom genre is simply that these texts are interested in the concept of wisdom” (*The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom*). And there are particular books in Scripture—such as Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes—that are so dominated by the concept of wisdom, by way of structure and content and purpose, that calling them “Wisdom literature” seems fitting.

If we are going to explore what the Bible teaches about wisdom, we will also welcome passages of various genres, passages that point us to wisdom and life, passages that show the blessings of obedience and the consequences of folly.

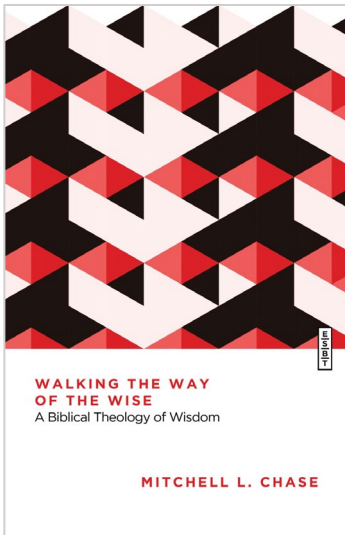
—Taken from the introduction



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DETAILS



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Walking the Way of the Wise is a profound exploration into the depths of biblical wisdom, seamlessly blending scholarly insight with practical guidance. In this latest addition to the ESBT series, Mitchell Chase invites readers to rediscover wisdom as an essential thread woven throughout the tapestry of Scripture. Chase unveils wisdom not merely as knowledge or cleverness but as a life-giving path of joyful obedience to God's Word. By tracing the themes of wisdom and folly from Genesis to Revelation, *Walking the Way of the Wise* illuminates the role of wisdom in the covenant life of God's people.

Essential Themes in the History of Redemption

Discover the profound narrative of the Bible with the Essential Studies in Biblical Theology (ESBT) series. Benjamin L. Gladd edited the initial 9 volumes, and Michael Morales will be editing the additional 10 volumes within the series. This collection dives deep into the core themes that weave through the Bible's grand storyline, offering a cohesive exploration of biblical-theological concepts.

Unlike other open-ended series, ESBT is thoughtfully designed to offer a focused exploration within a framework of twenty volumes. Taking cues from Genesis 1-3, each book unravels a unique theme that contributes to the overarching history of redemption. The interlocking nature of these volumes means that while each stands strong individually, together they form a comprehensive and harmonious whole.

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Other volumes in the series include:



The Return of the Kingdom: A Biblical Theology of God's Reign by Stephen G. Dempster
March 19, 2024 | \$24.99, 232 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4291-9

In this ESBT volume, Stephen Dempster traces the themes of kingship and kingdom throughout Scripture, illuminating the challenges, pain, and ultimate hope that the Bible offers. The story of God's kingship is ultimately the fulfillment of a promise to defeat sin and death and to establish a world of peace and justice.



The Beginning and End of All Things: A Biblical Theology of Creation and New Creation
by Edward W. Klink III
May 30, 2023 | \$25.99, 200 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5522-3

Edward W. Klink III presents a holistic understanding of creation, one that is unfolded throughout all of Scripture and is at the core of the gospel itself. Along with offering rich insights about God and his purposes for the world, a biblical theology of creation guides how we engage nature, culture, and life as embodied beings.

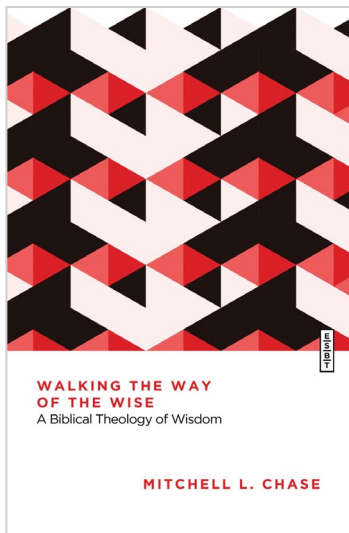


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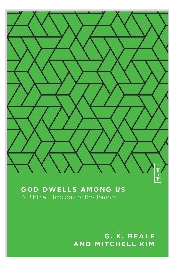
The Hope of Life After Death: A Biblical Theology of Resurrection by M. Jeff Brannon
November 15, 2022 | \$25.99, 200 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5531-5

In a world full of suffering and death, humans long for abundant life. In this ESBT volume, Jeff Brannon explores how the hope of life after death is woven throughout Scripture. As we follow the biblical themes of creation, fall, and redemption, we begin to understand the doctrine of resurrection and what it means for Christian faith and discipleship.



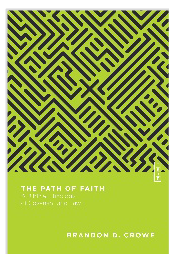
Face to Face with God: A Biblical Theology of Christ as Priest and Mediator by T. Desmond Alexander
March 22, 2022 | \$25.99, 176 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4295-7

How can sinful humans approach a holy God? In this ESBT volume, T. Desmond Alexander considers the often-neglected themes of priesthood and mediation and how Christ fulfills these roles. Through this study, students, church leaders, and laypeople alike will gain a richer understanding of concepts such as holiness, sacrifice, covenant, reconciliation, and God's dwelling place.



God Dwells Among Us: A Biblical Theology of the Temple by G. K. Beale and Mitchell Kim
December 21, 2021 | \$25.99, 200 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5535-3

What does the temple mean for the church's ongoing mission in the world? This ESBT volume examines temple theology throughout Scripture, exploring how this theme relates to Christian life and witness today. God has always desired to dwell among us; now the church must follow its missional call to extend the borders of God's kingdom and take his presence to the ends of the earth.



The Path of Faith: A Biblical Theology of Covenant and Law by Brandon D. Crowe
March 2, 2021 | \$25.99, 208 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5537-7

The closely related biblical themes of covenant and law are among the most important in Scripture. In this ESBT volume, Brandon Crowe considers these themes throughout both Old and New Testaments, laying out key principles such as our obligation to obey our Creator, how Jesus' perfect obedience to God's law opens the way to eternal life, and what the law means for us today.

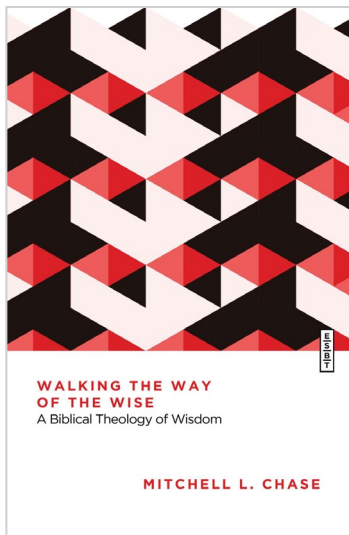


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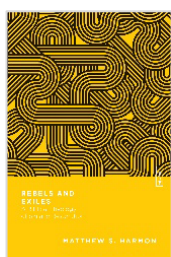
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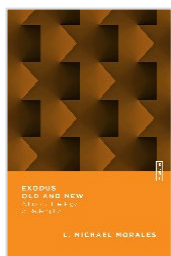
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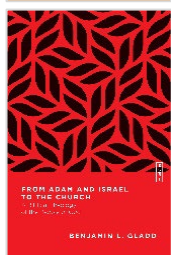
Rebels and Exiles: A Biblical Theology of Sin and Restoration by Matthew S. Harmon
October 27, 2020 | \$25.99, 184 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5541-4

We all share an experience of exile—of longing for our true home. In this ESBT volume, Matthew S. Harmon explores how the theme of sin and exile is developed throughout Scripture, tracing a common pattern of human rebellion, God's judgment, and the hope of restored relationship, beginning with the first humans and concluding with the end of exile in a new creation.



Exodus Old and New: A Biblical Theology of Redemption by L. Michael Morales
August 18, 2020 | \$26.99, 224 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5539-1

With Israel's exodus out of Egypt, God established a pattern for the salvation of all his people—Israel and the nations—through Jesus Christ. In this ESBT volume, L. Michael Morales examines three redemption movements in Scripture: the exodus out of Egypt, the second exodus foretold by the prophets, and the new exodus accomplished by Jesus.



From Adam and Israel to the Church: A Biblical Theology of the People of God by Benjamin L. Gladd
December 3, 2019 | \$25.99, 200 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5543-8

This ESBT volume addresses core questions about spiritual identity, examining the nature of the people of God from Genesis to Revelation through the lens of being created and formed in God's image. Benjamin Gladd argues that living out God's image means serving as prophets, priests, and kings, and he explains how God's people function in these roles throughout Scripture.

Coming soon:



The Earth Will Be Filled: A Biblical Theology of the Glory of God by Donnie Berry
December 2, 2025 | \$24.99, 192 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-1077-8

The glory of God is a central theme that runs throughout Scripture. But what is God's glory? And what does it mean to glorify God? According to biblical scholar Donnie Berry, glory refers to all the things the triune God is full of—his wisdom, love, creativity, beauty, strength, compassion, justice, life, joy—made manifest for us to see, to experience, to respond to, and, perhaps most surprisingly, to participate in. From beginning to end, God's plan has always been to reveal his glory to his people and through his people, so that his glory will fill the earth.



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