

1-1-2006

# BT 660 New Testament Theology

Ben Witherington

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## Recommended Citation

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# BT 660 NT THEOLOGY

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Office Hours: TR 10:00 – 10:50 am

Spring 2006

3 semester units

Enrollment Limit: None

TR – 1:00 – 2:15 pm

## Catalog Description

This course treats the general content and historical development of New Testament theology from the perspective and methodology of the contemporary biblical theology discipline.

## FOCUS OF THIS PARTICULAR COURSE OFFERING

This course will require that a concentrated amount of time be spent on each of the several topics addressed in the course which include theology proper, Christology, pneumatology, soteriology, and eschatology.

## Introduction

The discussion of NT Theology necessarily involves the discussion of NT theologies, which is to say, the theologies of the various authors of the NT. This means that we can speak, for example of the theology (singular) of Luke-Acts or of the Pauline corpus or of the Johannine literature. We can also speak of the Christology of Mark or of Revelation or other books. Further, we can discuss the eschatology of the different NT witnesses. In this course we will be describing and discussing the various theologies (inclusive of these several topics) but we will also compare these various subject with a view to saying what a theology (broadly understood to include all these topics) of the NT as a whole ought to look like. Since all of these topics are inter-related and all are dependent on the Christologies of the NT books, Christology will be the starting point or point of entry into these other topics.

Pre-requisites: NT 500 or 501/502, and IBS—1; or NT 520.

## Course Objectives

Having successfully completed this course, participants should:

- (1) be able to recognize the importance of a theological reading of the texts of the NT
- (2) be able to begin to master the skills necessary to do an informed theological presentation of some major theological topic;

- (3) grasp the importance of the storied world and use of rhetoric for understanding the theologies of NT authors;
- (4) understand the theological role of Paul's letters, the Gospels, Acts, the Revelation etc. in the New Testament canon;
- (5) be able to propose fruitful ways in which various theological portions of the NT may be read within the horizons of the contemporary church and world;
- (6) have a heightened sense of and commitment to the Son of God and the cross-shaped discipleship to which the NT calls Christians.
- (7) have the ability to read the NT in ways that are spiritually formative.
- (8) understand that when NT writers speak about the church of Jew and Gentile united in Christ, they are deliberately inculcating a cross-cultural and indeed global model of the church and ministry to the church
- (9) Understand that particularly the Pauline and Johannine concepts of the atonement are congenial to the Wesleyan stress on God not limiting the potential scope of atoning work

## Course Requirements and Reading

*On questions of style, especially with regard to paper organization and references, see Carol Slade, Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports, Theses, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000).*

*Students should submit written materials on time; late papers will receive no written comments and the grade will be penalized one-third of a grade per day.*

**(1) Class Preparation, Attendance, and Participation:** Participants should prepare for each class session by (1) carefully reading the assigned textbooks in full; (2) attend all classes. This is especially critical in the intensive class format; 3) interact with the professor and fellow students as the various topics are discussed.

Ice, Laura and B. Witherington, The Shadow of the Almighty, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). This text initiates the discussion of the use of Father language for God in the NT.

Witherington, Ben The Many Faces of the Christ (N.Y. Crossroad, 1998). This is the basic textbook on the Christological portion of the course.

Witherington, Ben. Jesus, Paul, and the End of the World, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity P, 1992). This book should also be read first in order to gain an understanding of the eschatological framework out of which several NT figures operate.

Witherington, Ben Paul's Narrative Thought World, (Louisville: Westminster/J. Knox, 1994), pb. This book gives an overview of Pauline theology in its various topics.

*Attendance at all sessions of the course is expected. In order to complete the course with a passing grade, no more than one session may be missed.*

**(2) A Critical Review:** A review of one of the following books, approximately 1300-1600 words (i.e., 5-6 pages, with a standard 12-point font like Times New Roman and one-inch margins) in length, typed, double-spaced. **Due on Thursday, February 23.** As a critical review, this essay should summarize the author's central theses; demonstrate the author's approach to the subject matter; and critique the author's analysis (e.g., with regard to the author's method, its faithfulness to the primary materials, its engagement with the wider discussion on the topic, and so on). (25%)

THE STUDENT MAY PICK ANY OF THE VOLUMES IN THE SERIES ENTITLED NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY, (CAMBRIDGE: CAMBRIDGE U. PRESS, 1991ff.). Go to the Cambridge website and peruse the catalog of possible offerings (e.g. R. Bauckham offers The Theology of Revelation).

**(3) A Research Assignment:** A theology paper of approximately 20 pages (with a standard 12-point font like Times New Roman and one-inch margins), typed, with 1.5 or double spacing, with appropriate notes and bibliography, treating a selected topic within NT theology (e.g. Christology, eschatology, pneumatology, ecclesiology). This paper should evidence *both* a close reading of the text *and* critical engagement with the range of secondary resources appropriate to the study. (See the bibliographic resources in the textbooks, as well as *New Testament Abstracts* in the Library.) **Due on Thursday, March 30.**

**(4) A Final Exam:** Comprehensive of the Lectures and content of the course (30%).

## **Reading and Course Schedule**

The course will begin with a general orientation, and we will consider first the use of Father and God language material in the NT. The Shadow of the Almighty book should be read in full for this class.

Following this, we will focus on Christology and during this period of time The Many Faces book should be read. The Christological portions of Paul's Narrative Thought World (i.e. the chapters on the story of Christ) should also be read.

Next we will focus on both soteriology and eschatology, and Jesus, Paul and the End of the World should be read, as well as the rest of Paul's Narrative Thought World.

Lastly, we will be putting the pieces together of the various topics and witnesses and asking the question what should a NT theology (which we have constructed) look like.

## Addendum

The student wishing to focus on other related topics in their term papers or critical reviews may wish to use any of the following recommended sources: 1) Witherington, The Christology of Jesus (Minn.: Fortress, 1990). This deals with Jesus' theology and self understanding; 2) G.D. Fee, God's Empowering Presence, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994). This major study deals in detail with every reference to the Holy Spirit in Paul's letters, which makes up about 60% of all references to the Spirit in the NT; 3) R.; Bauckham, The Theology of the Book of Revelation (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1993). This is clearly the best volume in the Cambridge series to date, and covers one of the most heavily theological and Christological works in the NT; 4) J. Lieu, The Theology of the Johannine Epistles, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1991). 5) J.B. Green, The Theology of Luke, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1997); 6) D. Moody Smith, The Theology of the Gospel of John, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1995); 7) I.H. Marshall and D. Peterson, eds. Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); 8) A Chester and R.P. Martin, The Theology of James, Peter and Jude, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1994).