

# Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Theology, Session 1, Introduction Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## 1. Abstract of Mathewson, NT Theology, Session 1, Introduction, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Mathewson's lecture introduces the concept of New Testament theology, distinguishing it from systematic theology by its focus on the Bible's redemptive storyline and historical context. The lecture explores key issues in the discipline, such as whether a central theme unites the New Testament and if its theologies are unified or divergent. It emphasizes grounding theology within the canonical scriptures and considering the Old Testament's role. The lecture will cover various methods of organizing New Testament theology, and the approach Mathewson will take in his lectures. The course will examine dominant themes emerging from both testaments and how they reach fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Finally, it positions New Testament theology as missional, relevant to the church's ongoing purpose and not just an academic exercise.

**2. 22 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mathewson, NT Theology, Session 1 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → NT Introduction → NT Theology).**



**Mathewson\_NTThe  
ology\_Session01.mp**

### **3. Briefing Document: Mathewson, NT Theology, Session 1, Introduction**

Okay, here is a briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpt of Dr. David Mathewson's lecture on New Testament Theology.

#### **Briefing Document: Dr. David L. Mathewson, New Testament Theology, Session 1, Introduction**

##### **Overview:**

This session serves as an introduction to New Testament Theology, framing it within the broader context of Biblical Theology. Dr. Mathewson focuses on defining Biblical Theology, distinguishing it from Systematic Theology, addressing key issues within the discipline, and outlining the course's approach. He also emphasizes the importance of understanding the Old Testament as the foundation for New Testament themes, starting with an examination of Genesis 1-3. A central idea is the tension between the "already but not yet" – the inaugurated fulfillment of God's promises in Christ and the anticipation of their ultimate consummation.

##### **Key Themes and Ideas:**

- **What is Biblical Theology?**
- Biblical Theology (BT) is often used synonymously with New Testament Theology in this course, but BT encompasses both Old and New Testaments.
- BT is more than simply referencing biblical texts. While systematic theologies also use scripture, BT differs in its approach.
- "So, from one perspective, one could say any theology that is based on the Bible or any theology that has as its primary topic the Bible or is supported by biblical references could be a biblical theology. But historically, biblical theology has come to mean something very different than that."
- **Biblical Theology vs. Systematic Theology:**
- **Systematic Theology (ST):** Arranges scripture logically, topically, and hierarchically. It's "ahistorical" (atemporal/synchronic), asking broad questions about God, the church, sin, etc., and synthesizing the entire scripture to answer those questions. "Systematic theology is usually a discipline that is based in its entirety upon scripture, but it's arranged logically, topically, and hierarchically."

- **Biblical Theology (BT):** Follows the Bible's "redemptive historical storyline or plot line." It's sensitive to literary genres and authorial emphases. It uses categories emerging from scripture itself and is "temporal and diachronic" – focusing on how themes develop through the Old and New Testaments. "However, what seems to distinguish biblical theology is that it follows the Bible's redemptive historical storyline or plot line. It's sensitive to the literary genres of the Old and New Testaments."
- BT is seen as a bridge to ST, preventing mere "proof-texting."
- **Key Issues in New Testament Theology:**
  - **Is there a Center or Dominant Theme?** The question of whether one central theme unites the diversity of the Old and New Testaments. Many suggestions have been proposed (justification by faith, existential message, salvation history, kingdom of God, covenant, new creation, reconciliation, God's self-magnification). Mathewson suggests "God is gathering together a people in whose midst he will live and dwell."
  - **Is there Unified Theology or Divergent Theologies?** Does the New Testament present a unified theological perspective, or do divergent and even contradictory theologies exist? Mathewson assumes "that there is diversity but one that is complementary and not contradictory."
  - **Locus of Theology:** Where do we find material? The 66 books of the Old and New Testament canon are the basis. It is important to consider "a whole biblical theology" taking into account the entire canon of scripture, Old and New Testament alike.
  - **Importance of History:** Because the Bible records God's redemptive acts in history, New Testament theology cannot be divorced from it. It's not just a narrative theology but has access to historical events.
  - **Approaches to Organizing New Testament Theology:**
    - Using categories of Systematic Theology
    - Examining individual authors/books and their theological emphases
    - Tracing ideas/themes throughout the New Testament
    - Tracing a storyline from promise to fulfillment (Old Testament to New Testament)
      - Example, Greg Beale

- **Course Approach:**

- Mathewson will examine the dominant themes that emerge throughout the Old and New Testaments in terms of how they are part of the redemptive storyline. "the approach I'm going to take is that I will examine what I think are the dominant or main themes that emerge throughout the Old and New Testament in terms of how they are part of the redemptive storyline that finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ."
- This will involve looking at how these themes emerge and develop in the Old Testament and how they find their fulfillment in the New Testament in light of Christ.

- **Definition/Description of New Testament Theology:**

- "New Testament theology is the study of God's redemptive activity on behalf of his people and all of creation as it unfolds throughout the Old Testament and New Testament and finds its climactic fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ." This includes understanding contextualization and how individual books fit within the broader theological unity.

- **Missional Theology:**

- New Testament Theology is also missional theology.
- "...New Testament theology is about both the mission of Jesus to inaugurate God's kingdom and call people to respond, but it's also about the mission of his followers to proclaim the lordship of Jesus Christ and to call people to respond in faith and complete obedience and commitment to the person of Jesus Christ."
- It should take place within the context of the church, not just an academic exercise.

- **Addressing Concerns About Extracting Theology:**

- A potential criticism is whether New Testament Theology replaces the teaching of New Testament texts with a constructed theology.
- The counter-argument is that the canon of scripture "begs us" to ask what unifies it. New Testament Theology helps us see how individual texts contribute to the overall unity and understand the underlying assumptions of the authors.

- **Descriptive vs. Prescriptive:**
- While New Testament Theology is descriptive (describing what biblical authors believed), it is also prescriptive.
- It's the story of God acting redemptively and calling for obedience, proclaiming the lordship of Jesus Christ.
- **Promise and Fulfillment ("Already But Not Yet"):**
- New Testament Theology must be understood within the framework of promise and fulfillment (or "already but not yet," "now and not yet").
- The coming of Jesus Christ brings an initial fulfillment of Old Testament promises, but this is not exhaustive. It anticipates the ultimate and final fulfillment in the new creation.
- **Genesis 1-3 as a Starting Point:**
- Genesis 1-3 is presented as the beginning of the biblical storyline and introduces major themes that will be developed throughout scripture.
- Emphasis is placed on God as the sovereign creator who speaks creation into existence. This highlights God's power and ability to keep promises.
- The lecture will not focus on creation-evolution debates or literal interpretations of the days of creation, but rather on the overarching theological themes.
- "Genesis 1-3 then begins with God as the sovereign creator of all that exists, suggesting that creation owes its very existence to God, who simply speaks it into being by his powerful word."

#### **Next Steps (According to the Lecture):**

- The next section will focus on Genesis 1-3 to examine the emergence of these dominant biblical-theological themes.

## 4. Study Guide: Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 1A, Approaches to the Historical Jesus

### New Testament Theology: A Study Guide

#### Quiz: Short Answer Questions

1. How does biblical theology differ from systematic theology in its approach to scripture?
2. Why is it important to consider the Old Testament when studying New Testament theology?
3. What does it mean to say that systematic theology is an "ahistorical" discipline?
4. Describe Gerhard Hasel's "multiplex approach" to New Testament theology.
5. Explain the concept of New Testament theology as "missional theology."
6. What are the implications of viewing the Bible as God's revelation of himself in history?
7. What is meant by the "locus" of New Testament theology?
8. Explain the promise and fulfillment framework in New Testament theology.
9. Why is history important to New Testament Theology?
10. How can New Testament theology be descriptive *and* prescriptive?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. Biblical theology focuses on the redemptive-historical storyline of the Bible, tracing the development of themes throughout the Old and New Testaments, while systematic theology arranges scripture topically and logically to answer broad theological questions.
2. New Testament theology depends on the Old Testament because it develops themes and concepts introduced in the Old Testament, finding their climax and fulfillment in the New Testament. The Old Testament provides the background and foundation for understanding New Testament theology.
3. Systematic theology is considered "ahistorical" because it does not primarily focus on the historical development of theological themes or the intentions of

individual authors. Instead, it seeks to synthesize the entirety of scripture on a given topic, regardless of its historical context.

4. Gerhard Hasel's "multiplex approach" argues that there is no single dominant theme in New Testament theology. Instead, multiple themes should be allowed to stand in relationship with each other without attempting to prioritize one over the others.
5. New Testament theology as "missional theology" means that it is not merely an academic discipline but a theology about the mission of Jesus to inaugurate God's kingdom and the mission of his followers to proclaim the lordship of Jesus Christ, calling people to respond in faith and obedience.
6. Viewing the Bible as God's revelation of himself in history implies that there is a unity within its diversity, reflecting God's unified perspective on his revelation. It also highlights the importance of understanding God's redemptive acts in history as central to biblical theology.
7. The "locus" of New Testament theology refers to the source of material for theological study, which, according to the text, is the 66 books of the Old and New Testament canon.
8. The promise and fulfillment framework in New Testament theology refers to the tension between the initial fulfillment of God's promises in Jesus Christ and his church (already), and the ultimate, consummated fulfillment in the new creation (not yet).
9. History is important to New Testament Theology because the Bible claims to record God's redemptive acts for his people in history. New Testament Theology cannot be divorced from history because we claim and confess that God has revealed himself historically in redemptive acts on behalf of his people.
10. New Testament Theology is descriptive because hopefully it emerges from the New Testament itself and from exegesis of the New Testament. But it is also prescriptive because scripture is the authoritative revelation of God to his people, who have a story in which we are called to complete commitment and obedience.

## Essay Questions

1. Discuss the different approaches to New Testament theology, as outlined by Mathewson, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each. Which approach do you find most compelling and why?
2. Explore the tension between the diversity and unity within New Testament theology. How does the concept of a "center" or dominant theme contribute to this discussion?
3. Analyze the role of the Old Testament in shaping and informing New Testament theology. How does understanding the Old Testament enhance our understanding of the New Testament?
4. Examine the claim that New Testament theology is "missional theology." What are the implications of this perspective for the church and its mission in the world?
5. Explain the "already but not yet" or promise and fulfillment framework in New Testament theology. How does this framework influence our understanding of key theological themes?



## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Biblical Theology:** A discipline that studies the theology of the Bible, emphasizing the redemptive-historical storyline, literary genres, and the unique emphases of different authors within the Old and New Testaments.
- **Systematic Theology:** A discipline that organizes theology logically, topically, and hierarchically, based on the entirety of scripture, to answer broad questions about God, humanity, salvation, and other important themes.
- **Diachronic:** Focusing on how biblical themes develop through time, tracing their evolution and progression throughout the Old and New Testaments.
- **Synchronic:** Taking a broad, non-temporal view of scripture, focusing on synthesizing what the entire Bible teaches on a given topic without emphasizing historical development.
- **Redemptive History:** The unfolding of God's plan of salvation throughout history, as revealed in the Old and New Testaments, culminating in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- **Locus:** The source or location where material for theological study is found, typically referring to the 66 books of the Old and New Testament canon.
- **Canon:** The authoritative collection of books recognized as the inspired word of God, comprising the Old and New Testaments.
- **Eschatology:** The study of the "end times" or the final events in God's plan of salvation, including the second coming of Christ, the resurrection, and the new creation.
- **Missional Theology:** A theological perspective that emphasizes the mission of God and the role of the church in participating in that mission, proclaiming the gospel and calling people to respond in faith and obedience.
- **Promise and Fulfillment:** A framework for understanding the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, in which the promises of God in the Old Testament find their initial fulfillment in Jesus Christ and his church, anticipating a greater, consummated fulfillment in the future (new creation).

## 5. FAQs on Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 1A, Approaches to the Historical Jesus, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ on New Testament Theology

- **What is the difference between Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology?**
- Systematic theology arranges scripture topically and logically to answer broad questions about God, Jesus, sin, etc., synthesizing what the entire Bible teaches on these topics. It tends to be ahistorical, not focusing on the development of themes through scripture or the author's specific intentions. Biblical Theology, however, focuses on the Bible's redemptive-historical storyline. It is sensitive to literary genres and authorial emphases, using categories that emerge from scripture itself, and tracing how themes develop across the Old and New Testaments, culminating in the New Testament.
- **Is there a central, unifying theme in New Testament theology, and if so, what is it?**
- There's no universal agreement on a single dominant theme. Throughout history, scholars have proposed various candidates, including justification by faith (Martin Luther), an existential message (Rudolf Bultmann), salvation history or the kingdom of God (George Eldon Ladd), covenant (Walter Eichrodt), and new creation (Greg Beale), among others like salvation or God's self-magnification. Some argue for a "multiplex approach," suggesting no single theme should dominate. A unifying theme or narrative might be that God is gathering a people in whose midst he will live and dwell.
- **Is there a unified theology in the New Testament, or do divergent and potentially contradictory theologies exist?**
- While the New Testament exhibits diversity in materials and themes, the course assumes a complementary, not contradictory, unity. Viewing the Bible as God's revelation of himself in history, culminating in Jesus Christ, suggests that amidst diversity, a unified perspective exists. This unity owes itself to God's consistent self-revelation. If there's one author ultimately standing behind both the Old and New Testaments, then that unity must somehow be accounted for.

- **What is the basis for New Testament theology? What sources should be used?**
- The 66 books of the Old and New Testament canon are the primary basis. While other Jewish or New Testament literature can provide helpful background information, the theology should emerge from and be based on the canonical scriptures that the church confesses as the authoritative Word of God. New Testament Theology should always be informed by the Old Testament in order to demonstrate God's Pan-Biblical or holistic theology.
- **How does history relate to the New Testament Theology?**
- Since the Bible records God's redemptive acts in history, New Testament theology cannot be divorced from history. It's not just narrative theology but also requires acknowledging the historical events testified to in the Old and New Testaments. The study of history is important because we claim and confess that God has revealed himself historically in redemptive acts on behalf of his people, which we now find testified to in the Old and the New Testaments.
- **What are the different approaches to organizing and studying New Testament theology?**
- There are several approaches: 1) Using systematic theology categories (God, Trinity, etc.); 2) Examining individual New Testament authors and books to understand their theological emphases; 3) Tracing specific ideas or themes as they develop throughout the New Testament or Old and New Testament; and 4) Tracing a storyline of major themes from the Old Testament to their fulfillment in the New Testament.
- **What is a useful definition or description of New Testament Theology?**
- New Testament theology can be described as the study of God's redemptive activity on behalf of his people and all of creation as it unfolds throughout the Old and New Testament and finds its climactic fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ. It also includes understanding how that theology is contextualized in certain New Testament documents and by New Testament authors.

- **In what way is New Testament theology missional?**
- New Testament theology is not merely an academic pursuit but is integrally linked to the mission of Jesus to inaugurate God's kingdom and call people to respond and the mission of his followers to proclaim the lordship of Jesus Christ and call others to faith, obedience, and commitment. It shapes the ongoing mission of the church and should take place within the context of the church. Furthermore, New Testament theology recognizes that these promises have already been fulfilled in Jesus and the people that he's created in anticipation of the greater consummated fulfillment in the future.