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Jan Van Der Watt

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ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

EXEGESIS OF THE JOHANNINE LITERATURE (NT 617)

Jan Van Der Watt, Fall 2004

1. Course details

- 1.1 *Person responsible:* Jan van der Watt will offer this course. (Since I am a visiting scholar, you might want to get to know me and my institution better. Please go to www.up.ac.za, then to 'Academic departments' and then to 'Department of New Testament Studies').
- 1.2 *Contact details:* jgvdw@icon.co.za
- 1.3 *Duration:* Fall 2004
- 1.4 *Contact sessions and hours of credit:* three (3) hours per week for the duration of the second semester 2004. Total hours of credit: 37.5
- 1.5 *Prerequisites:* NT[IBS] 510 or 511; NT 520; and NT 500 or 501/502 or equivalent. May be taken by students in MA programs not requiring Greek by special arrangement with the professor

2. Description

A study of selected passages in Johannine literature this course will deal with the various textual, historical, exegetical, theological, and ethical concerns raised in Johannine literature. The focus in the course will be on familiarizing the student not only with the content of this book, but also with the exegetical and hermeneutical issues that it raised and raises.

3. Objectives of the course

Having successfully completed this course, the student should

- 3.1 be able to analyze the Johannine literature from historical, social, literary, and theological perspectives based on responsible exegetical work. Special competence should be shown in developing theological themes found in the Johannine literature.
- 3.2 be able to apply relevant methodological approaches to the Johannine material (*inter alia*, literary, socio-historical, theological, historical) and appreciate their usefulness for addressing theological issues. The student should be able to handle hermeneutical challenges in a responsible manner.
- 3.3 show an adequate measure of self-sufficiency in reading the Johannine documents, which includes knowledge of the most important positions taken in research, familiarity with the most important commentaries and relevant

literature, knowledge of websites where Johannine material is available, and having a grip on the nature, structure and exegetical challenges of the Johannine material.

3.4 display creative thinking in dealing with Johannine material.

3.5 have a working framework for continuing investigation of the Johannine literature.

4. Prescribed material

4.1 *Required material (Please note that where specific pages are indicated you most probably need not buy the book).*

* Please bring either a **Greek New Testament** (UBS or Nestle-Aland, ed 27) AND/OR **Revised Standard Version** (2 ed) to class.

** Books marked with a double asterisk (**) should definitely be bought.

- **Gospel of John:**

1. Barrett, C. K. 1978 *The Gospel According to John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*. Philadelphia:Westminster. Pages 67-99.
2. Brown, R. E. 1966 *The Gospel According to John I-XII*. vol. 1 Garden City, NY: Doubleday. Pages LII-LXIV and LXVII-LXXIX.
3. ** Carson, D.A. 1991 *The Gospel according to John*. Grand Rapids:Eerdmans. (Only on the verses to be considered).
4. ** Culpepper, R.A. 1998 *The Gospel and Letters of John*. Nashville:Abingdon. Pages 13-73, 87-105.
5. Davies, M. 1992 *Rhetoric and reference in the Fourth Gospel*. Sheffield:SUP. Pages 119-161.
6. Schnackenburg, R. 1982 *The Gospel According to John*. Vol 2. New York:Crossroad. Pages 398-410.
7. Smith, D.M. 1995 *John*. Cambridge:CUP. Pages 139-144.
8. Thompson, M.M 2001 *The God of the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids:Eerdmans. Pages 227-240.
9. Van der Watt, J.G. 2000 *Family of the King. Dynamics of metaphor in the Gospel according to John*. Leiden:Brill. Pages 266-296 and 382-392.

- **The Letters of John**

1. Culpepper, R.A. 1998 *The Gospel and Letters of John*. Nashville:Abingdon. Pages 251-283.
2. Van der Watt, J.G. 1999 Ethics in 1 John: a literary and socioscientific perspective *CBQ* 7, 1-21.

- **Revelation:**

1. ** Bauckham, R. 1993 *The theology of the book of Revelation*. Cambridge:CUP. Pages 1-108 and 126-143.

4.2 Websites.

The following are some of the more useful websites for Johannine research. You will find numerous links to other Johannine material on these websites.

- <http://www.ntgateway.com>
- <http://www.fourthgospel.com>
- www.torreys.org/bible/

4.3 Recommended material

Since the number of publications in the Johannine literature is overwhelming, mention will be made of standard and relevant works in class. It will be mentioned what these publications are all about and where their usefulness lies.

5. Expectations

5.1 Class attendance

Due to the nature of the course regular on-time attendance is essential. If it is not possible to attend a class, please notify the professor in advance. Hopefully no person will miss more than two contact sessions.

5.2 Manner in which contact sessions will be conducted

Contact sessions will consist of a combination of class discussions (seminars) and lectures. Preparation for classes is of utmost importance.

- *Short class essays (30% of final mark):* These essays should be prepared for and handed in at each particular contact session (see the program). Where possible these should have two parts: one part should reflect the prescribed reading done and the other part should reflect the person's own, motivated ideas on that particular topic. *These essays must be handed in at the beginning of each contact session (keep a copy for yourself). NO LATE ESSAYS WILL BE ACCEPTED.*

Any person may be at any time asked to present his/her ideas in and to the class, based on their short class essay. Please be prepared for that.

5.3 One short assignment (20% of final mark): A short assignment on the interpretation of a passage in John's Gospel must be handed in. For particulars see the program. The assignment should not be more than 3000 words. Please start preparing this assignment in advance.

5.4 *A test on some of the reading material (20% of the final mark)*: A test to evaluate the knowledge on certain aspects of the work will be conducted. See the particulars in the program. Please start your preparation in advance.

5.4 *Final assignment (30% of final mark)*: This assignment will test your knowledge of the Johannine literature as well as your ability to integrate that knowledge. A list of topics is provided (see later in this program), but you are welcome to suggest your own topic. In the latter case please first discuss and confirm the proposed topic with the professor.

6. Evaluation procedures for this course

Evaluation will be done on the following basis:

- Short class essays (class work): 30%
 - One short assignment: 20%
 - A test on some of the reading work: 20%
 - A final assignment (flexible topic): 30%
- = 100%

The grading system will be as follows:

- A 4.00 Exceptional work - surpassing, markedly outstanding achievement of course objectives.
A-
B+
B 3.00 Good work - strong, significant achievement of course objectives.
B-
C+
C 2.00 Acceptable work – basic, essential achievement of course objectives.
C-
D+
D 1.00 Marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives.
D-
F 0 Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives.

7. Program:

The following program will serve as a guideline of what is envisaged to take place during the contact sessions.

Please note the following: To allow for the dynamics of a course like this the contents are subject to modification during the course of the semester. If modifications are made, it

will be clearly announced during the contact sessions. Feel free to make any suggestions that might enhance the quality and enjoyability of this course.

Week 1: *What are we reading when we read the Gospel of John?*

- Aims of this meeting:
 1. Administrative arrangements will be made.
 2. It will be asked where this Gospel comes from? (Johannine community and the possible development of this Gospel).
 3. The position of this Gospel in the canon will be highlighted.
 4. The purpose of this Gospel will be considered.
 5. The influence of the Johannine conflict on the message of the Gospel will be investigated.

Week 2: *Discovering John's world*

- Aims of this meeting:
 1. To determine the structure of the Gospel.
 2. To analyze John 1-2 with focus on the Prologue and the titles of Jesus.
- Reading:
 1. Read John 1-2 (in Greek if you can).
 2. This reading work deals with the contents of Week 1: Culpepper, pages 13-73 and Brown, pages LXVII-LXXIX.
- Class essay: Identify and list all the names given to Jesus in chapter 1. What are the implications of this for the Gospel as narrative? (1000 words).

Week 3: *On the road with the unique Son, the Logos (ch 3-12)*

- Aims of this meeting:
 1. The basic aim will be an enriched reading of chapters 3-12.
 2. The special role of chapters 1-4 in the structure of this Gospel will be analyzed.
 3. Jesus as bringer and giver of eternal life will receive attention (ch 5-6).
 4. The diverse reactions to the presence and message of Jesus will be analyzed (ch 7).
 5. Focus will fall on Jesus as the light of this world – He must be followed because He is LIFE (ch 8-12).
- Reading:
 1. Read John 3, 5, 7-8, 10, 12 (just scan ch 4, 6, 9, 11). Try to get an overall impression of the flow of the Gospel.

2. Read the following sections with Carson (commentary): 3:1-5; 4:11-15; 5:17-30; 6:52-58; 8:12; 10:7-10; 11:17-27; 12:44-50.
 3. Read Brown, pages LII-LXIV.
- Class essay: What is the meaning and significance of eternal life according to the passages you have read. (1000 words).

Week 4: *Sitting with Jesus and his church – God in action in the present and future (ch 13-21)*

- Aims of this meeting:
 1. To determine the function of the last meal on the message of Jesus (ch 13).
 2. To ask where the Father and Son is to be found in the congregation? (ch 14).
 3. To establish the essence of relationships according to John? (ch 15).
 4. To find out what it means that Jesus is going away (ch 16).
 5. To evaluate the report back after a successful mission (ch 17).
 6. To analyze irony in top gear – the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus (ch 18-20).
 7. It is now up to the church... to find out what that means for John (ch 21).
- Reading:
 1. Read John 13-17. (Scan 18-21).
 2. Read Culpepper on John 18-20.
- Class essay: Identify and list the major themes in John 13-17. Then say in your own words what you think John's message to the church is in chapter 13-17.

NOTE: A TEST WILL BE HELD NEXT WEEK ON THE FOLLOWING MATERIAL: Culpepper, pages 13-73; Brown, pages LII-LXIV and LXVII-LXXIX.

Week 5: *The stories of John...weaved together to make one big story for this world (the structure of John's theological thought)*

THIS MEETING WILL START WITH A 30 MIN TEST ON THE MATERIAL AS INDICATED UNDER WEEK 4.

- Aims of this meeting:
 1. To become acquainted with the multiple level (story) theory.
 2. To discover the interrelatedness of the different theological themes in this Gospel.
 3. To consider the problems of writing a Johannine theology.
- Reading:

1. Read Culpepper, pages 87-105.
 2. Read Barrett, pages 67-99.
- Class essay: What is the role and importance of the mission of Jesus (and consequently the mission of the believers) in the Gospel of John? (1000 words).

Week 6: *Communicating the message from above... some stylistic features in this spiritual Gospel*

- Aims of this meeting:
 1. The nature of the figurative language used in this Gospel will be analyzed.
 2. The function of social imagery (for instance, meals, familial and forensic features) will receive attention.
 3. The “marriage” between speeches and narrative will be witnessed.
 4. Individual stylistic features like double meaning, double entendre, “lies”, irony in unfolding the message will be noted.
- Reading:
 1. Read the following sections with Carson. Try to figure out what the nature and characteristics of the particular stylistic feature in each case are:
 - John 2:3-7 and 7:3-10.
 - John 6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 11; 11:25-26; 14:6; 15:1; 18:5.
 - John 3:3-4; 7:32-36.
 - John 7:39; 12:23; 17:1,5.
 2. Read Van der Watt (2000), pages 382-392.
- Class essay: Describe the stylistic features reflected in the verses mentioned above (1000 words).

Week 7: *Theological themes I: He is the savior of the world! Salvation in John.*

- Aims of this meeting:
 1. The question must be answered: From what must people be saved? What is the nature of sin in John’s Gospel?
 2. Question two: what is the context and contents of salvation in John?
 3. Question three: does John have a soteriology of the cross or not?
 4. Question four: what is the role of revelation in salvation and how should one understand it?
- Reading:
 1. Read the following sections with Carson:
 - John 3:14-15, 8:28-29; 12:31-34
 - John 10:11-18

- John 12:23-26
2. Read Schnackenburg, pages 398-410.
- Class essay: By referring to the above verses (and others you might find) write an essay on the way in which Jesus' death is presented in John's Gospel (1200 words).

Week 8: *Theological themes II: Do as your Father does. Johannine ethics*

- Aims of this meeting:
 1. The dynamics of New Testament ethics vs. Christian ethics is going to be considered.
 2. Ethics and ethos in the Gospel and Letters of John is going to be investigated.
- Reading:
 1. Read John 13 and 15:1-17 with Carson.
 2. Read Van der Watt, 1999 and 2000 pages 266-296.
- Class essay: Write a critical essay on the ethics of John. (1000 words).

Week 9: *Theological themes III: Theo-logy and Christ-ology in John's Gospel*

- Aims of this meeting:
 1. Is John primarily a theo-logical or a Christ-ologic book? This question will be considered carefully.
 2. Answers to the following questions will be sought:
 - a. Who is God the Father?
 - b. Who is Jesus the Son?
 - c. Who is the Spirit-Paraclete?
 - d. Are they one? and if so, how?
- Reading:
 1. Read the following passages with Carson:
 - John 1:1-2, 18; 20:27-29.
 - John 5:16-24; 10:31-39
 - John 10:28-30; 17:11, 20-21, 23.
 2. Thompson, pages 227-240
 3. Davies, pages 119-161
 4. Smith, pages 139-144
- Class essay: How should we understand the unity between the Father and the Son? (1000 words).

[This is not compulsory reading, but two classical articles are:

- Borgen, P. God's agent in the Fourth Gospel, 67-78.
- Meeks, W.A. The man from heaven in Johannine Sectarianism, 141-173.

Both these article are reprinted in Ashton, J. 1986 *The interpretation of John*. Philadelphia, Fortress.]

Week 10: *Time to read somebody else's letters...*

- Aims of this meeting:
 1. The circumstances of 3 John will be considered.
 2. The question why 1 and 2 John was written will be investigated.
 3. The theological dynamics in the Letters will receive close attention.
- Reading:
 1. Read all three letters of John in your Bible.
 2. Read Culpepper, pages 251-283.
- Class essay: Identify and describe the major themes in the Letters of John (800 words).

NOTE: A SHORT EXEGETICAL ASSIGNMENT (NOT MORE THAN 3000 WORDS) MUST BE HANDED IN ON THE FOLLOWING PERICOPTE: 1 JOHN 1:1-4.

* *The aim of this assignment is to give you some feeling of working exegetically with a Johannine text. A thorough and motivated exegesis of this passage must be offered.*

* Give attention *inter alia* to the following: the context, the structure of the text, the most important terms and their meanings, the theological themes and their resonance in the rest of the Letter.

* Please read the text carefully with the use of commentaries. You are free to use commentaries of your choice. Please also see what you can find on the internet but do not rely too heavily on that. The articles are not always of equal or even good quality.

Week 11: *Revelation: a war story with a nice ending... for some.*

- Aims of this meeting:
 1. The different possibilities for structuring the Apocalypse are going to be discussed.
 2. Reading the Apocalypse as war drama is going to be considered.
- Reading:
 1. Read the Bible text of Revelation
 2. Read Bauckham, pages 1-53.
- Class essay: What does Revelation tell us about God? What do you think is

the significance of this for us today? (1000 words).

Week 12: *A strange language: reading symbols in Revelation*

- Aims of this meeting:
 1. A key question to be considered is what symbols are and how they should be interpreted.
 2. Attention will be given to the construction of complicated networks of symbols in the Apocalypse as well as to their interpretation.
 3. A trial run in interpreting symbols will be taken (for instance, ch 1-3; 13).
- Reading:
Read Bauckham, pages 54-108.
- Class essay: Describe the dynamics of the symbol of the Lamb. List the important points you would like to make in a sermon. (1000 words).

Week 13: *The apocalypse now... some serious questions!*

- Aims of this meeting:
 1. The following questions will receive attention:
 - a. Is God really in charge of this world?
 - b. What about different worldviews? Can we still believe that the earth is flat?
 - c. Where is heaven?... a golden city?!
 - d. When will the end come... about issues like dispensationalism, rapture and the thousand years of peace??
- Reading:
 1. Read the following sections in Revelation:
 - Rev 4.
 - Rev 21 with 1 Thes 4:13-18 and 2 Peter 3:10-13.
 - Rev 20:1-10 with 1 Thes 4:13-18, Mat 24:36-44.
 2. Read Bauckham, pages 126-143.
- Class essay: Do you think God is still in charge of today's world and why? (1000 words).

NOTE: YOUR FINAL ASSIGNMENT IS DUE: ONE OF THE FOLLOWING TOPICS (OR A PRE-ARRANGED TOPIC OF YOUR OWN CHOICE) SHOULD BE SELECTED:

- Eschatology according to the Gospel and Letters of John

- Demonology in John's Letters and the Apocalypse
 - Pneumatology in the Johannine literature (including Revelation)
 - Ecclesiology in John's Gospel
 - Ecclesiology in the Apocalypse
1. The aim of this assignment is to test the student's ability to responsibly explore a theological theme in the Johannine literature.
 2. Careful attention should be given to exegetical issues, especially in the framework of the particular Johannine books. The exegetical results should be carefully and responsibly be systematized and integrated. Notes will be provided in class to assist in this process.
 3. Make sure to consult the most important commentaries. At least two articles (in journals) and one theological dictionary on the topic must be consulted. Please explore the library and internet for other relevant sources.
 4. Marks will be given for content, presentation as well as technical abilities. The latter means that the bibliography, footnotes, way of quoting and referring to other scholars will be evaluated too.
 5. In case of any uncertainty or questions, please contact the professor.

Please do your best; remember, we are doing this for God and his kingdom and that is a privilege!