

'Return To Me': A Biblical Theology of Repentance (New Studies in Biblical Theology)

By Mark J. Boda



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"Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you," (Zech 1:3 ESV). Repentance concerns the repair of a relationship with God disrupted by human sin. All the major phases of church history have seen diversity and controversy over the doctrine. The first of Luther's famous ninety-five theses nailed to the church door in Wittenburg in 1517 stated that 'the entire life of believers should be one of repentance'. In recent times, two divisive debates within evangelicalism over 'lordship salvation' and "hypergrace" have had repentance at their core. The theme of repentance is evident in almost every Old and New Testament corpus. However, it has received little sustained attention over the past half-century of scholarship, which has been largely restricted to word studies or focused on a particular text or genre. Studies of the overall theology of the Bible have typically given the theme only passing mention. In response, Mark Boda offers a comprehensive overview of the theological witness of Scripture to the theme of repentance in this New Studies in Biblical Theology volume. The key to understanding is not simply to be found in word studies, but also in the broader meaning of texts as these communicate through a variety of words, images and stories. The importance of repentance in redemptive history is emphasized. It is fundamentally a return to intimate fellowship with the triune God, our Creator and redeemer. This relational return arises from the human heart and impacts attitudes, words and actions. Addressing key issues in biblical theology, the works comprising New Studies in Biblical Theology are creative attempts to help Christians better understand their Bibles. The NSBT series is edited by D. A. Carson, aiming to simultaneously instruct and to edify, to interact with current scholarship and to point the way ahead.



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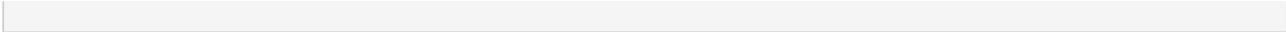
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Editorial Review

Review

"This volume [is] an immensely helpful addition to the library of any student, scholar, pastor, or teacher in biblical and theological studies." (Josh Matthews, *Review of Biblical Literature*, 12/2016)

"Mark Boda begins this book with a great quote from Luther affirming that 'the entire life of believers should be one of repentance.' So repentance is not just for gross wrongdoers or people who have turned right away from God. It is for all of us. Most of the book then treats the biblical material book by book, even passage by passage, which will make it especially useful for Bible study and for preaching. It's not a book to read in one go. Read it section by section and let it draw you to God. But Dr. Boda doesn't stop at the book-by-book treatment, and he is especially illuminating when he stands back and reflects on the material as a whole." (John Goldingay)

"In *'Return to Me'* Mark Boda has made his immense scholarship on repentance and penitential prayer accessible to all who want to study this critical biblical-theological concept in Scripture. As he moves from Genesis to Revelation, his stimulating study is exhaustive and demonstrates the richness and extensive scope of the theme. All serious students of the Bible, but particularly pastors and seminarians, will benefit from his impressive work. I have learned much from Mark, and you will as well." (Tremper Longman III, Robert H. Gundry Professor of Biblical Studies, Westmont College)

"In *'Return to Me'* Mark Boda does an outstanding job of explicating the oft-neglected theme of repentance, moving across the canon as he demonstrates the important role of this theme within biblical theology. A welcome new addition to the *New Studies in Biblical Theology* series. I recommend it heartily." (J. Daniel Hays, dean of the Pruet School of Christian Studies and professor of biblical studies, Ouachita Baptist University)

"Mark Boda has shown himself to be a master of exegetical analysis and theological reflection. He traces repentance in both its relational and behavioral dimensions, both of which call for faith and trust. As he unfolds the richness of biblical teaching about repentance and its significance, we are called again to 'return to the Lord.' Pastors will be motivated by this book to engage their congregations in a study of repentance and a recommitment to it." (John H. Walton, professor of Old Testament, Wheaton College and Graduate School)

"I have not found another book that sets out to treat repentance in quite the way that Mark Boda has: he patiently, thoroughly and effectively works his way through Scripture to learn what repentance means and what it looks like in each canonical corpus, covering not only commonly used words but also the fundamental concepts." (D. A. Carson)

"Boda's book will serve pastors and scholars well in showing that repentance is neither mechanical nor forced upon people in the Bible's presentation; rather, it springs from a deeply personal encounter between sinful people and a holy God." (J. Andrew Dearman, *Themelios*, December 2015)

About the Author

Mark J. Boda (PhD, University of Cambridge) is professor of Old Testament at McMaster Divinity College and professor in the Faculty of Theology at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario. He is the author of

numerous books, including *Praying the Tradition* and *A Severe Mercy*, a commentary on 1 & 2 Chronicles, and studies of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. He is coeditor of the *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets and Seeking the Favour of God* (3 volumes).

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