

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BNTI 507 THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

Dennis E. Johnson, Ph.D.

Independent Studies Program

COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the context, content, major interpretive issues, and theological contribution of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in order to strengthen their confidence in the superiority of Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and equip them to use the epistle to "encourage one another daily" in the church's pilgrimage through life's wilderness toward the better, heavenly country.

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this course students should be able to:

(Cognitive)

1. Reach informed conclusions regarding the epistle's authorship, original audience, and purpose.
 - 1.1 List the identifications that have been proposed regarding the authorship of Hebrews.
 - 1.2 Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the argument for each proposal.
 - 1.3 Identify the evidence within the epistle that provides information concerning its original audience and their situation.
 - 1.4 Identify the proposals that have been offered regarding the identity and life situation of the epistle's original audience.
 - 1.5 Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the argument for each proposal.
 - 1.6 Integrate evidence concerning the audience's situation and the epistle's main themes into a statement of the epistle's purpose(s).
2. Describe the genre, method of theological argument, and main themes of the Epistle to the Hebrews.
 - 2.1 Identify features within the epistle that indicate its genre.
 - 2.2 Infer interpretive principles and strategies appropriate to the genre.
 - 2.3 Outline the structure of the epistle, the main movements in its argument.
 - 2.4 Describe and illustrate its method of Christological interpretation of Old Testament texts.

3. Discuss significant questions in the interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews, demonstrating acquaintance with alternative views and offering evidence and argumentation for the view that the student prefers.
 - 3.1 Christology and the question of Jesus' "being made perfect"
 - 3.2 Relationship of old covenant and new covenant
 - 3.2.1 History of redemption
 - 3.2.2 Mode of revelation
 - 3.2.3 Covenant law
 - 3.2.4 Typology: shadow and reality
 - 3.2.5 Sacrifice for atonement
 - 3.2.6 Worship and sanctuary
 - 3.2.7 Land/City-inheritance promises
 - 3.3 Priesthood in the order of Melchizedek
 - 3.4 Wilderness-paradigm of the Christian community's present experience
 - 3.4.1 Wilderness generation
 - 3.4.2 House of God
 - 3.4.3 Priests of God
 - 3.5 Apostasy

(Affective)

4. Glorify God for the superiority of Christ, the mediator of the new and eternal covenant.
5. Approach God confidently in prayer through Christ our high priest.
6. Respond to present trials with persistent faith and hope.
7. Take initiative to encourage struggling fellow-Christians, with compassion and confidence.
8. Rejoice in the superiority of new covenant worship, centered in the Son and the heavenly Jerusalem, versus the touchable "shadows" of old covenant worship.

(Performative)

9. Explain and apply passages from Hebrews so as to make clear their meaning and relevance to late-twentieth century audiences.
 - 9.1 In writing
 - 9.2 In preaching or teaching
 - 9.3 In counseling
10. Replicate the hermeneutical method of Hebrews in interpreting other Old Testament texts.

TEXTBOOKS

Lane, William L. *Hebrews 1-8* (WBC 47A); *Hebrews 9-13* (WBC 47B). Waco: Word, 1991.

COURSE LECTURER

Dennis E. Johnson Ph.D., Westminster Theological Seminary - CA

Dr. Dennis Johnson is Professor of Practical Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, Escondido, California. Dr. Johnson also serves as an associate pastor at New Life Presbyterian Church (P.C.A.). He has written prolifically, including *Immutability and Incarnation*, *Christ and Our Many Cultures*, and *The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption*. He also contributed to the New Geneva Study Bible (1995). His education credentials are:

Westminster Theological Seminary, MDiv.

Westminster Theological Seminary, ThM.

Fuller Theological Seminary, Ph.D.

METHODOLOGY

The Independent Studies Program provides the opportunity to study selected subjects at a distance without attending classes. Individuals taking an independent studies course use:

- a set of required textbooks,
- a lecture series on cassette tapes,
- a study guide and a set of specific course assignments.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The lecture material of the course will be taught in a series of twenty-four 44-minute cassette tapes. In addition to listening carefully to these lectures you are required to:

1. Read the entire textbook, William L. Lane's two-volume commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews in the *Word Biblical Commentary* series. Read the appropriate section(s) of the commentary in advance of each lecture.
2. Research and write a 4,500-word (15 pp.) exposition of a text in Hebrews, consulting the textbook and other commentaries, lexical and grammatical resources, and, if appropriate and feasible, journal articles and other monographs. The exposition should give attention to the situation of the readers (particularly the specific nature of their need for exhortation/encouragement as reflected in your text), the role of the text in its literary

contexts (the argument of the epistle, the Old Testament, other New Testament writings), the author's purpose, and the structure and movement of thought by which the text advances toward that purpose. It is recommended that you consult and interact with, *in addition to Lane*, at least one other modern evangelical commentary (F. F. Bruce, P. Ellingworth, D. Hagner, P. E. Hughes), a critical commentary or two (H. Attridge, H. Montefiore, G. W. Buchanan, J. Moffatt) and at least one classic Protestant commentary (J. Calvin, J. Owen, W. Goudge). Your objective is to produce not a narrowly-focused research paper, but a balanced, informed, well-reasoned *explanation of the message of the text as a whole*, as a foundation for preaching or teaching the text in a church or Bible study setting. (Nevertheless, observe standard academic conventions by identifying quotations, footnoting, and including a bibliography of works consulted.)

3. Sustain a mid-term examination and a final examination on the lecture material and the *introductory material* in Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*:

Mid-term: Lane, vol. 1, pp. lvii-ciii (writer, audience, circumstances/date, integrity, genre, literary structure, purpose/plan); lectures 1-12.

Final: Lane, vol. 1, pp. ciii-clvii (conceptual background, Old Testament text, Hebrews & Judaism, Christology, theology of Hellenistic church, recognition, text); lectures 13-24.

4. Answer the questions in the Interactive Learning Guide and hand in those answers (typewritten) to your proctor. These questions are designed to assist you in note taking and in achieving higher levels of interaction and learning. Your proctor will tell you how often you are to hand in your answers.

Lectures

(Reading assignments in Lane in parenthesis. Pages are numbered successively through the two volumes. **Pages in volume 2 are in boldface.**)

1. Authorship and Canonicity (*xlvii-li, cl-clvii*)
2. Authorship and Canonicity (continued), Audience, Destination, and Purpose (*li-lxvi*)
3. Genre, Structure, and Theological Method (*lxvi-ciii*)
4. Hebrews 1:1-4 (*1-19*)
5. Hebrews 1:5-2:4 (*19-41*)
6. Hebrews 2:5-18 (*41-67*)
7. Hebrews 3:1-19 (*68-91*)
8. Hebrews 4:1-13 (*91-105*)
9. Hebrews 4:14-5:10 (*105-128*)
10. Hebrews 5:11-6:20 (*128-155*)
11. Hebrews 6:13-20 (continued); Hebrews 7:1-28 (*155-198*)
12. Hebrews 8 (*198-211*)
13. Hebrews 9:1-14 (*213-241*)

14. Hebrews 9:15-28 (241-252)
15. Hebrews 10:1-18 (252-271)
16. Hebrews 10:19-39 (271-311)
17. Hebrews 11:1-22 (312-366)
18. Hebrews 11:23-40 (366-395)
19. Hebrews 12:1-13 (395-430)
20. Hebrews 12:14-29 (431-491)
21. Hebrews 13:1-16 (491-553)
22. Hebrews 13:17-25 (553-575)
23. Hermeneutics and Christology in Hebrews (*cxii-cxliv*)
24. Soteriology and the Christian Life in Hebrews (*cxliv-cl*)

INTERACTIVITY ASSIGNMENT

To fulfill the interactivity assignment for your course, do the following:

1. Register with the online forum at www.ITScourses.org to receive your user name and password.
2. Post an original answer to each interactivity question for your course (2 questions – 75 word minimum each).
3. Reply to one answer given to each question (75 word minimum).
4. Submit to AGTS a document containing:
 - a. The questions of the forum,
 - b. Your original answers to the questions,
 - c. Your replies to other students' answers, and
 - d. The students' answers to which you replied.

NOTE: Since the questions often synthesize the course, you should complete this assignment at the end of your course work.

COURSE GRADING

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| Interactivity Assignment: | 5% |
| Exegetical Paper | 25% |
| Mid-term Exam | 20% |
| Final Exam | 20% |
| Completion of the Interactive Learning Guide | 25% |
| Completion of the Reading | 5% |

GRADING PROCEDURE

All course requirements are to be sent to:

AGTS
Office of Continuing Education
1435 N Glenstone
Springfield, MO 65802

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Recommended Resources (or works referred to in the lectures)

- Attridge, H. A. *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia). Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989.
- Barrett, C. K. "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," in W. D. Davies and D. Daube, edd. *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956. pp. 363-93.
- Beale, G. K., ed. *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Text? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994
- Brown, Raymond. *Christ Above All: the Message of Hebrews* (The Bible Speaks Today). Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1982.
- Bruce, A. B. *The Epistle to the Hebrews: the First Apology for Christianity* (1899). Repr. Minneapolis: Klock and Klock, 1980.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (New International Commentary on the New Testament). Rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
- Buchanan, George W. *To the Hebrews* (Anchor Bible). Garden City: Doubleday, 1972.
- Calvin, John. *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (D. W. and T. F. Torrance, edd. Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, vol. 12). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963.
- Davidson, Richard M. *Typology in Scripture*. Andrews University Press, 1981. pp. 280-316, 388-424.
- Davies, J. H. *A Letter to Hebrews* (Cambridge Bible Commentary). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.
- Ellingworth, Paul. *The Epistle to the Hebrews: a Commentary on the Greek Text* (New International Greek Testament Commentary) Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.

- France, R. T. "The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor," *Tyndale Bulletin* 47 (1996): pp. 245-76.
- Gaffin, Richard B. "A Sabbath Rest Still Awaits the People of God," in C. G. Dennison and R. C. Gamble, edd. *Pressing Toward the Mark: Essays Commemorating Fifty Years of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*. Philadelphia: Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986. pp. 33-51.
- Goppelt, Leonhard. *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982.
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- Hagner, Donald A. *Hebrews* (New International Biblical Commentary). Peabody: Hendrickson, 1990.
- Hughes, Graham. *Hebrews and Hermeneutics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Hughes, John J. "Hebrews IX 15ff. and Galatians III 15ff.: A Study in Covenant Practice and Procedure," *Novum Testamentum* 21 (1979): pp. 27-96.
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- Jewett, Robert. *Letter to Pilgrims*. New York: Pilgrim, 1981.
- Johnson, Dennis E. "The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Mosaic Penal Sanctions," in William S. Barker and W. Robert Godfrey, edd. *Theonomy: A Reformed Critique*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990. pp. 171-192.
- Johnson, Dennis E. "The Epistle to the Hebrews: Introduction and Notes," in R. C. Sproul, gen. ed., *New Geneva Study Bible*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995. pp. 1932-1957.
- Käsemann, Ernst. *The Wandering People of God* (tr. R. A. Harrisville and I. L. Sandberg). Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984.
- Kistemaker, Simon J. *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (New Testament Commentary). Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984.
- Kline, Meredith G. *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy: Studies and Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963.
- Lane, William L. *Call to Commitment: Responding to the Message of Hebrews*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985.
- Lampe, G. W. H., and K. J. Woolcombe, *Essays on Typology* (Studies in Biblical Theology, 22). Naperville: Allenson, 1957.

- Lincoln, Andrew T. "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament," in D. A. Carson, ed. *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982. pp. 197-220.
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- Longenecker, Richard N. *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975.
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- Robertson, O. Palmer. *The Christ of the Covenants*. Phillipsburg: P & R, 1980.
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- Vos, Geerhardus. "Hebrews, Epistle of the *Diatheke* (? ? ? ? ? ?)," and "The Priesthood of Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in G. Vos, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*. R. B. Gaffin, Jr., ed. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980. pp. 126-233.
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SPECIFIC DATA

Please refer to the catalog for specific data regarding all Independent Studies Program (ISP) policies. All questions regarding ISP courses should be referred to the Office of Continuing Education at the contact information below:

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