

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BNTI 530 NEW TESTAMENT INTRODUCTION

AN AGTS CD-ROM COURSE

Featuring: James D. Hernando, Ph. D.

Independent Studies Program

COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introduction to the content and background of the New Testament, including the critical issues involved in the discipline of New Testament Introduction.

OBJECTIVES

At the successful completion of this course the student should be able to:

Knowledge

1. Outline and describe the basic political history of Judaism in the Hellenistic Period
2. Describe and discuss the basic social structures that permeated the world of the New Testament.
3. Identify and describe the various forms of Judaism in Palestine and in the Diaspora including their beliefs and practices.
4. Discuss the major religions and intellectual movements of the Hellenistic-Roman World at the time of the New Testament.
5. Identify and describe the various methods/approaches to New Testament interpretation, their goals, presuppositions and general practice.
6. List and discuss the major interpretive and introductory issues pertaining to the major portions of the New Testament: Synoptic Gospels, Luke-Acts, John's Gospel, The Pauline Corpus, Hebrews, The General Epistles and Revelation.

Skills

1. Integrate the New Testament events and writings into the broader cultural-historical matrix of the era.
2. Analyze and evaluate the impact of Judaism and Hellenism on the language and culture of the Early Church as expressed and revealed in the literature of the New Testament.
3. Critique and evaluate the various methods of New Testament interpretation assessing both their positive contributions and limitations for New Testament exegesis.

Attitudes

1. Appreciate the rich diversity of the New Testament in regard to literary genre, historical setting, and theological perspective.
2. Acknowledge that the writings of the New Testament stand in both continuity and contrast to many cultural-historical elements in Judaism and the Greco-Roman world.
3. Recognize that critical methods of New Testament interpretation are not autonomous, nor self-directing, but should operate within presuppositional parameters consistent with clear biblical teaching.

TEXTBOOKS

Bell, Albert A. Jr. *Exploring the New Testament World: An Illustrated Guide to the World of the Jesus and the First Christians*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998.

Elwell, Walter A., and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998

Strobel, Lee. *A Case For Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 2000.

BASIC OUTLINE

Lesson	Topic	Handout/Assignment
1	Judaism and Graeco-Roman World The Self-Understanding of a biblical Jew	
	Online Forum Discussion Question #1	
2	Historical Survey of Palestine to the time of Christ	Alexander the Great (read before viewing Lesson 2)
3	Historical Survey of Palestine to the time of Christ	Roman Emperors – Augustus to Hadrian(read before viewing Lesson 3)
	Online Forum Discussion Question #2	
4	The Maccabean Period to the Birth of Christ	
5	Sectarian Judaism	
6	Sectarian Judaism Part II Hellenism and the Religious World of the NT	Hellenism and the Religious World of the NT (read before viewing Lesson 6)
	Online Forum Discussion Question #3	
7	Hellenism and the Religious World of the NT The Historical Critical Method	Hellenistic Popular Religion (read before viewing Lesson 7)
	Online Forum Discussion Question #4	
8	The Historical Critical Method Types of Criticism	Criticism Handout – The Bible Text & Critical Methodologies
9	Types of Criticism Gospel and Gospels	<i>Take-Home Mid-term Exam over Introductory Material (Take before viewing Lesson 10)</i>

	Online Forum Discussion Question #5	
10	The Gospel of Matthew	The Synoptic Problem (read before viewing Lesson 10)
11	The Gospel of Mark The Gospel of Luke	<i>Critical Book Review due</i>
12	The Gospel of Luke	
13	The Gospel of John	<i>Critical Reflection Questions due</i>
14	The Gospel of John	
	Online Forum Discussion Question #6	
15	The Book of Acts	
16	The Apostle Paul	Pauline Chronology (read before viewing Lesson 16)
17	The Apostle Paul The Opponents of Paul	
18	The Teachings of the Apostle Paul	
19	The Teachings of the Apostle Paul	
20	Galatians Romans	
	Online Forum Discussion Question #7	
21	Romans 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians	Historical Reconstruction of Paul's Correspondence and Relationship with the Corinthians (read before viewing Lesson 21)
22	1 & 2 Thessalonians	
23	1 & 2 Thessalonians The Prison Epistles Philippians	
24	Ephesians	
25	Colossians Philemon The Pastoral Epistles	
26	The Pastoral Epistles 1 Timothy 2 Timothy Titus	
27	The General Epistles Hebrews	
28	James	
29	1 & 2 Peter	
30	Jude 1, 2, 3 John Revelation	Jewish Apocalypticism (read before viewing Lesson 30) <i>Research Project Due</i> <i>Final Exam – not comprehensive</i>
	Online Forum Discussion Question #8	

METHODOLOGY

In this course we will seek to meet our objectives through:

1. CD-Rom Video Sessions (*these CD-Roms require the use of Internet Explorer*)
2. Asynchronous Online Forum Discussion Questions
3. Individual reading, research, and writing assignments

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. The student is expected to view all class sessions. A question will be asked on the final exam as to how much of the video sessions were viewed.
2. Completion of the course textbooks and handouts. **For each:** give a bibliographic citation of the book/handout, and affirm that you read it in its entirety. **Turn this in with your Final Exam.**
3. A **critical book review** of Lee Strobel's *A Case For Christ*, plus written responses on the selected **reflection questions**. (*See Lee Strobel Reflection Questions*)
4. The student will participate in **online forum discussion** questions during the term in response to questions posed by the professor. The discussion will focus on an aspect of the session presentations that allows the student to further their understanding by interaction with their colleagues. Your response should completely address the question posed, using good grammar, spelling, punctuation, and organization. Each response should be **at least 200 words in length**. Also, respond to at least 1 (one) of your classmates' responses. Your responses should be an evaluation of the respondents' thoroughness, line of argument, reasoning, biblical support, and insights. These responses should be **at least 100 words in length**. It should *not* focus on spelling, grammar, or descend to an argument about opinions. You will be provided access to the discussion forum by the Continuing Education Office when you are officially registered for the course.
5. **Research Project:** ONE of the following: (*See Project Descriptions*)
 - a. A 10-12 page Problem Description Essay on a specific problem/question of NT introduction; OR
 - b. A Historical Backgrounds Project, OR
 - c. a Glossary Project
6. Mid-term Exam (Take-Home, Open Book Exam)

This exam will cover the introductory material for this video course (Lessons 1 -9). This exam should be taken **BEFORE** viewing Lesson 10. It will be an open-book take-home exam and will consist of subjective essay questions
7. Final Exam

The Final exam covers the rest of the material included in this video course (Lessons 10-30). For samples for the types of questions that will be posed on the final exam see *Final Exam Sample Questions* at the end of this syllabus.

All assignments are to be typewritten, double-spaced, represent quality graduate level work, and follow the *Turabian* style manual, 6th edition.

All assignments must include a title page that includes your name, address, phone and email, course number, title, and assignment title.

Due date: All assignments are to be postmarked no later than 15 weeks after course registration (check your course release form for the exact due date).

(All projects must be received by the continuing education office by your due date)

NOTE: Work submitted after this date will be subject to a letter grade reduction pro-rated according to the time of final submission. The participant will also be charged a \$30 change-of-grade fee if post-session course work is turned in after the due date.

Assignments should be mailed or emailed to:

AGTS Continuing Education
1435 N. Glenstone Avenue
Springfield, MO 65802
agts-ext@agts.edu

GRADING PROCEDURE

1. Grade Weights:

a. <i>Reading - Essay Project</i>		<i>points</i>		<i>%</i>
Critical Book Review	100	"	=	10%
Reflection Questions	100	"	=	10%
b. <i>Research Project (3 choices)</i>	200	"	=	20%
Project Description Paper				
OR				
Historical Backgrounds Project				
OR				
Glossary Project				
c. <i>Reading Textbooks & Handouts</i>	100	"	=	10%
d. <i>Online Forum Discussions</i>	100	"	=	10%
e. <i>Mid-term Exam</i>	200	"	=	20%
f. <i>Final Exam</i>	200	"	=	20%
Total	1000		=	100%

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aune, David E. *The New Testament and Its Literary Environment*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987.
- Barker, Glenn W., Lane, William L., and Michaels, J. Ramsey. *The New Testament Speaks*. NY: Harper and Row, 1969.
- Barrett, C. K. *New Testament Background: Selected Documents*. NY: Harper and Row, 1956.
- Black, D.A., and D.S. Dockery eds. *New Testament Criticism and Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991. (out of print, but worth having)
- Bruce, F. F. *New Testament History*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1972.
- Cadbury, H. J. *The Making of Luke-Acts*. 2nd ed. London: SPCK, 1958, 1968.
- Carson, D. A., and Woodbridge, John D. eds. *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon*. Grand Rapids: Academic Books, 1986.
- Carlidge, David R., and Dungan, David L. *Documents for the Study of the Gospels*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980.
- Daube, David. *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*. London: Arno Press, 1956.
- Davies, W. D. *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*. Cambridge: University Press, 1963
- Epp, Eldon Jay, and MacRae, George W. eds. *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989.
- Ferguson, Everett. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987.
- Gerhardsson, Birger. *The Origins of the Gospel Tradition*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979.
- Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Introduction*. 4th ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1970, 1990.
- Kummel, Werner G. *Introduction to the New Testament*. Translated by A. J. Mattill, Jr., Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965.
- _____. *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems*. Translated by S. McLean Gilmour and Howard C. Kee. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970.
- LaSor, W. S. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972.
- Lohse, Edward. *The First Christians: Their Beginnings, Writings, and Beliefs*. Translated by M. Eugene Boring. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.

- Lohse, Eduard. *The New Testament Environment*. Translated by John E. Stealy. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976.
- Malherbe, Abraham. *Social Aspects of Early Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.
- Marshall, I. Howard ed. *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977.
- Meeks, Wayne A. *The First Urban Christians*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.
- Metzger, Bruce M. *The New Testament: Its Background, Growth and Content*. 2nd edition. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983.
- Murphy, Frederick J. *The Religious World of Jesus: An Introduction to Second Temple Palestinian Judaism*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1991.
- Nash, Ronald. *Christianity and the Hellenistic World*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1984.
- Neill, Stephen, and Wright, Tom. *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1986*. 2nd ed. Oxford: The University Press, 1988.
- Niswonger, Richard L. *New Testament History*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988.
- Nock, A. D. *Early Gentile Christianity and Its Hellenistic Background*. NY: Harper and Row, 1964.
- Paoli, E. A. *Rome, Its People Life and Customs*. London: Longman, 1963.
- Sanders, E. P. *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.
- Sherwin-White, A. N. *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*. Oxford: University Press, 1963.
- Soulen, Richard N. *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, rev. ed. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981.
- Tenney, Merrill C. *New Testament Times*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965.
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SPECIFIC DATA

Prepared by James D. Hernando, Ph. D., November 9, 2004. Revised for CD-Rom course delivery by Monty Galloway, M. Div., December 2005.

BNTI 530 New Testament Introduction
Final Exam Sample Questions:

Multiple Choice Questions:

- The earliest mention of the Gospels by Justin Martyr calls them ...
 - a. memoirs b. gospels c. biographies d. sermons
- Which of the (4) Gospels was not linked to an apostle
 - a. Matthew b. Mark c. Luke d. John
- Which is NOT a reason why the Gospels were written?
 - a. The need to spread of the Gospel required it.
 - b. The need to preserve the record before those who knew it best died
 - c. The need to remember what Jesus said and did until he returned
 - d. The need to verify the truth against false accounts.

True and False Questions:

- T/F The Pax Romana contributed to the spread of the Gospel across the entire Roman empire.
- T/F The *essential* form of the Gospels is biographical.
- T/F F. C. Baur was a biblical scholar whose work greatly aided in the fight against the historical skepticism toward the Bible.

Matching Questions:

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| ___ Titus | a. his policies drove the Jews to revolt |
| ___ Antipater | b. built Masada |
| ___ Antiochus IV | c. settled a Hasmonean dispute that give Palestine to Rome |
| ___ Herod the Great | d. Father of one of the richest rulers in the ancient world |
| ___ Pompey | e. Vespasian's son who destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem |

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

Problem Descriptive Essay Project

1. This is NOT a *formal* term paper, in the sense that the project does not require that you take a position, defend it or work toward a definitive solution. It will, however, require documentation (K. Turabian's Manual For Writers) in terms of footnotes and bibliography.
2. This essay seeks to *define* and *clarify* a problem in NT introduction, illustrate the approaches taken by scholars, past and present, and suggest areas of further investigation. Topics must be approved by the professor.
3. The student may align him/herself with a particular view and give rationale for doing so, but is not required to "prove" conclusively the validity of your position

*NOTE: The goal of this essay is to **present an issue/problem** so clearly that the layman could pick up your essay, read it and know what is at stake.*

Areas:

I. *The New Testament World*

1. Greco-Roman religion and philosophy: the question of its influence on the authors of the NT
2. Social and cultural practices of the Greco-Roman world
3. Hellenistic mystery religions and Christianity
4. Gnosticism and the NT, or John's Gospel, or any NT book (eg., Colossians).¹
5. Jewish social life and culture (any aspects that would lend clarity or interpretive insight) E.g., Wedding/Marriage rites and customs
6. Parties and sects within Judaism E.g., Who were the Sadducees? Samaritans? Zealots? etc.
7. Religious beliefs, practices and institutions within Judaism

II. *Critical Approaches to NT Interpretation*

1. What is literary or genre analysis? (or some other critical approach NOT covered at length in class.
2. The insights and limitations of _____ (some critical method).
3. Examining the presuppositions and practices of (some critical method)
4. The life and legacy of _____ (some NT scholar, interpreter or theologian of lasting influence)

III. *The Literature of the New Testament*

¹ Be sure to consult R. Nash's *Christianity and the Hellenistic World* - his chapter on alleged influences of Gnosticism on NT authors.

1. The Synoptic Problem (definition and current status of the debate)
2. Defining the genre of the Gospels
3. The historicity of the Gospel accounts (or the Historical Jesus Debate)
4. The authorship, date, sources, or historical occasion (choose one) of the Fourth Gospel
5. The historical value, theology, or historical occasion (choose one) of Luke-Acts
6. The integrity and/or authenticity of any epistle or group of epistles in the Pauline corpus
7. The authorship, integrity, and/or authenticity of any of the General Epistles
8. Revelation and Apocalyptic Literature: Comparison and Contrast
9. The NT Apocrypha - Why are they not in our Bible?
10. The NT Canon (Some aspect of their development and/or identification)

Critical Book Review (See *How to Write a Critical Book Review*)

1. Choose a book for review (Preference should be given to those in the Select Bibliography.) and read carefully and critically.
2. Include:
 - a. Author's thesis statement or purpose
 - b. Problem area(s) addressed or defined
 - c. Distinctive approach or methodology (if any)
 - d. Major subject area(s) investigated
 - f. Your own personal assessment as to how well the author argued his case, accomplished his agenda, proved his thesis etc., and the value of this work for study in NT introduction.

Historical Background Project

Time-Line

1. Construct a large multi-level time-line that covers the period from Cyrus' decree (539 BC) to AD 200.
2. Include separate levels for the following:
 1. Political history including world empires, kings, emperors and major events relating to the same (especially "transitional" and "epoch" events).
 2. Judaism: Israel's political and religious history*
 3. The Graeco-Roman world*
 4. Christianity and the Church* (include Church Fathers)

NOTE: Include parallel literary developments whether canonical or non-canonical, whether secular or sacred.

Guidelines:

3. The design, format and contents of the project are left up to the student, as long as they meet the minimum requirements covered in the project description.
4. Students are encouraged to strive for ***legibility, clarity and utility*** in the overall presentation.
5. Speculative or uncertain dates should be so indicated with the symbol (?) range of dates are also acceptable e.g., ca. AD 170-180.

Glossary Project

1. Construct a glossary of ***no less than 30 terms*** related to NT introduction including special persons, places, things and events that appear in the two or more chosen texts other than our own. *You may choose terms in our own texts that have NOT been defined adequately or completely in the text or glossary.*
 - a. Construct the glossary with a following format:
 - i. Paragraph length entries
 - ii. Topical or category divisions allowed if you deem helpful. E.g.s, Judaism - Religion; Judaism social culture; Greco-Roman - Religion etc.
 - iii. Entries in each division should appear in alphabetical order
 - iv. Include a bibliography of all sources used in the research and writing of the glossary
2. Grading will include evaluation of 1) suitability of terms (range and scope of subjects) covered; 2) accuracy of content; 3) legibility and utility of design (Can it be easily read and used for research?)
3. The instructor can provide samples of glossary terms that are suitable for this project.

Lee Strobel Reflection Questions

Ch. 1 Do you believe that the gospels can have a theological agenda while at the same time being trustworthy in what they report? Why or why not? Do you find Blomberg's Holocaust analogy helpful in thinking through this issue?

Ch. 2 When people you trust give slightly different details of the same event, do you automatically doubt their credibility, or do you see if there is a reasonable way to reconcile their accounts? How convincing did you find Blomberg's analysis of the apparent contradictions among the gospels?

Ch. 3 Having read the interview with Dr. Metzger, how would you rate the reliability of the process by which the NT was transmitted to us? What are some of the reasons you find this process trustworthy or not?

Ch. 4 What do you consider the most persuasive corroboration that Yamauchi talked about? Why?

Ch. 5 If Luke and other NT writers are shown to be accurate in reporting incidental details, does this increase your confidence that they would be similarly careful in recording more important events? Why? Or why not?

Ch. 6 Boyd said, "I don't want to base my life on a symbol. I want reality . . ." Why do you agree or disagree? Is it enough that Jesus is a symbol of hope, or is it important for you to be confident that his life, teachings, and resurrection are rooted in history? Why?

Ch. 7. What are some of the difficulties we face in determining what historical figures thought about themselves? What clues would you find most helpful in determining this? Why did the clues offered by Witherington convince or fail to persuade you that Jesus though he was God and the Messiah?

Ch. 8 What are some of the differences between a patient in a mental hospital claiming to be God and Jesus making the same assertion about himself?

Ch. 9 Carson addressed some verses that on the surface seemed to suggest that Jesus was a created being or a lesser God. Did you find his reasoning persuasive? Why or why not? What did his analysis of these issues teach you in terms of the need for appropriate background information in interpreting Scripture?

Ch. 10 Even if you're not Jewish, is there an aspect of Lapidé's spiritual journey that is similar to your own? Were there any lessons you learned from Lapidé about how you should proceed?

Ch. 11 How would you react to the soldiers if they were abusing, humiliating and torturing you, as they did Jesus? What could possibly account for Jesus' reaction, which was to utter in the midst of his agony, "Father, forgive them"?

Ch. 12 As Craig pointed out, everyone in the ancient world admitted that the tomb was empty; the issue was how it got that way. Can you think of any logical explanation for the vacant tomb other than the resurrection of Jesus? If so, how do you imagine someone like Bill Craig might respond to your theory?

Ch. 13 How influential is the 1 Cor 15 creed in your assessment of whether Jesus was seen alive? What are your reasons for concluding it's significant or insignificant in your investigation?

HOW TO WRITE A CRITICAL BOOK REVIEW

I. PREPARATION

1. Read the Preface and Introduction of the book carefully. Take note of what the author says the book is about and why it was written.
2. Examine the Table of Contents. Take note of the major divisions and how they organize and develop the subject of the book.
3. Read the book with pencil and paper in hand, taking notes as you go. If you own the book, you may want to jot down notes and questions in the margin of book.

II. FORMAT

A. Introduction - include statements about:

1. The topic/subject (a brief, but clear description)
2. Author's stated purpose, thesis, or special interest in writing this work
3. Author's stated perspective on the topic (This would include any foundational presuppositions)
4. Any acknowledged limitations or self-criticisms by the author
5. Author's stated strategy/plan in writing this work

B. Content Evaluation - may include the following:

1. A brief description of the major focus of the work and a statement of assessment as to whether you feel the subject matter was especially significant and worthy of address
2. A general overview and evaluation of the book's content
 - a. coverage of the topic - include a description of the major divisions of the book
 - b. Evaluate the development of the material in addressing the topic.
3. A general description of the book's format and physical presentation
 - a. How it was laid out?
 - b. Was the format attractive, useful, easy to follow?
 - c. What extra features were especially useful or distracting? E.g.s, charts, appendices, glossary, pictures, chapter summaries etc.
4. An evaluation of the author's ability to communicate in his/her writing
 - a. clarity of thought and expression
 - b. vocabulary
 - c. sentence structure (simple and direct, or complex and confusing)
5. A summary of noteworthy observations, finding or conclusions found in this work

C. Summary - may include:

1. A statement of whether you thought the author accomplished his stated goals and objectives (if not, why?)
2. A judgment of your general impression of this work and of its value to the field of study it addresses.

3. Any personal benefits derived from reading it

III. GUIDELINES

1. Be comprehensive in presenting the topic or subject matter, but not exhaustive. **Summary** is the key word. Don't get bogged down in minutiae.
2. When giving detailed information, let it illustrate broad general features/themes of the work. **Succinct** is the key word
3. In writing, seek to inform the person who knows virtually nothing of the topic being addressed. **Simple** is the key word.

IV. "GRADE EXPECTATIONS"

- A** All components present, well-written (little or no mechanical writing errors, (spelling, punctuation, grammar and syntax), active engagement of the author and his/her ideas. Your work shows some creative thinking, critical analysis and/or evidence of corollary study.
- B** All (or nearly all) components present, well-written (some minor mechanical errors present), clearly expressed.
- C** Some components not present, too many mechanical writing errors so as to obscure meaning and hinder comprehension.
- D/F** Significant components missing, poorly written (many mechanical writing errors - no evidence of proofreading, difficult to read and comprehend), inaccuracies and evidence of very little effort or thought.

SPECIFIC TO *New Testament Introduction*:

1. Did you find the book a helpful companion for reading your other new testament texts and reading assignments. Why and why not?
2. What did you think of the following:
 - a. The overall term selection
 - b. The clarity of expression and ease of comprehension
 - c. Organization and format
 - d. CD - Research capability
3. An features of the book that you feel were noteworthy as "strengths" or "weaknesses."
4. Were there any terms, names, expressions that you wished had been included in the book?