

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Degree Completion Program
BNTD 530 New Testament Introduction
May 6 - June 3, 2004
(3 credits; 4th credit option)

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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

The purpose of this course is to introduce beginning master's level students to the study of the New Testament by providing a basic overview of its content and character; its historical background; its cultural and religious setting in the Greco-Roman world; its production, collection, and canonization; and approaches to its interpretation. Upon the successful completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Evaluate the impact of the political history of the Jewish nation in the Hellenistic Period upon the Jews' expectancy of a kingly Messiah.
2. Differentiate among the various expressions of Judaism in 1st Century Palestine and the Diaspora by identifying and describing their distinguishing beliefs and practices.
3. Compare and contrast the religious teachings of the New Testament and the major religions of the Greco-Roman World at the time of the New Testament.
4. Defend intelligently your informed point of view with respect to the major interpretive and introductory issues pertaining to the Synoptic Gospels, Luke-Acts, John's Gospel, Pauline Epistles, General Epistles, and Revelation.
5. Critique various recent approaches to New Testament interpretation, assessing both their positive contributions and limitations.
6. Interpret more soundly the New Testament writings by employing your understanding of their historical/cultural/theological background, including political realities, social structures, and religious movements in both the Greco-Roman and Jewish milieus.
7. Preach and teach from the New Testament with greater depth, richness and confidence as a result of understanding its message more clearly and appreciating its unique character.

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.

Elwell, Walter A. and Robert W. Yarbrough, Eds. *Readings From the First-Century World*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998.

BASIC OUTLINE

- I. Environment of the New Testament
 - A. Prolegomena
 1. Meaning of “Testament”
 2. Content and Character of the New Testament
 3. Relationship of the Old and New Testaments
 - B. The Land of the New Testament
 - C. Jewish History Between the Testaments
 - D. Judaism of the 1st Century
- II. Establishment of the New Testament Church
 - A. Synoptic Gospels
 - B. John’s Gospel
 - C. Life of Christ
 - D. Interpretive Approaches to the New Testament
- III. Expansion of the New Testament Church
 - A. The World Christians Encountered in the 1st Century
 1. Sociology of the Ancient Mediterranean World
 2. Greco-Roman Religions and Philosophies
 - B. Acts: The History and Theology of the Christians’ Encounter with the World
- IV. Exhortation to the New Testament Church
 - A. The Genre of “Epistle”
 - B. Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity
 - C. Paul’s Letters
 - D. The Collection of Paul’s Letters
 - E. Epistolary Pseudepigrapha? A Case Study in the Pastoral Epistles
- V. Endurance and Hope of the New Testament Church
 - A. Epistle to the Hebrews
 - B. Epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude
 - C. Revelation
 - D. Recognition and Preservation of the New Testament Canon

METHODOLOGY

It is assumed that the students taking this class in either the Degree Completion Program or the regular curriculum have not had the benefit of an undergraduate degree in religion, biblical studies, or theology. Due to the paucity of classroom hours and the nature of adult learning, much of the course objectives will be accomplished through the diligent study and preparation of the adult learner outside the classroom via individual reading, reflection, and writing, which will be supplemented by classroom lectures and guided classroom discussion of issues related to the scheduled readings, written assignments, and lectures.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

For the three-credit option, students will need to complete satisfactorily requirements 1-5 below:

1. **Class attendance and participation:** Participation in all class sessions is expected. The atmosphere of the class for adult learners is intended to be collegial, with relevant questions, comments and discussion both welcomed and expected as evidence of class preparation (see #2 below).
2. **Completion of the assigned readings:** The nature of the Degree Completion Program requires that class sessions move through a significant amount of material rather quickly. Therefore, thorough preparation for each class session is essential for maximum productivity in the face-to-face classroom time allotted. Please note the scheduled assignments below, which are to be completed prior to the designated class session.
3. **Reading Reflection Papers:** A two-page summary/reflection over required reading is due at the beginning of each class. The paper should contain only a very brief overview of the reading, identifying the major themes. At least half of the paper should be devoted to your reflection on those issues in the reading that you have found to be either particularly insightful and enriching or inadequate and disturbing. The more effective Reading Reflection Papers will give evidence of the student's exploration and interaction with the supplemental multimedia CD-ROM accompanying the textbook, *Encountering the New Testament*. You may effectively use the CD's glossary, video clips, and interactive review questions, as well as the study questions at the end of each chapter in the textbook, to stimulate your thinking for the five Reading Reflection Papers. Late Penalty: 5% per class period. *Note: Due to the challenges faced by working adults, students may submit one Reading Response Paper late, without penalty. In any regard, the approved late papers must be submitted within one week of the original due date, except that the final Reading Reflection Paper may be no later than Monday following the last class meeting.*

4. **Analysis and Application Papers:** Each student must submit three Analysis and Application Papers, each of which is to be five pages in length. Late Penalty: 5% per class period. *Note: The assignment schedule lists four Analysis and Reflection papers. However, students are to omit one of the four according to their needs and preferences. The three Analysis and Application Papers selected should be submitted by the due date indicated in the assignment schedule. To avoid the late penalty, exceptions must be cleared with the professor in advance.*
5. **Final Exam:** This exam, covering the contents of two of the textbooks, *Encountering the New Testament* and *Exploring the New Testament World: An Illustrated Guide to the World of the Jesus and the First Christians*, will be given on the final session.
6. **Optional 4th Credit:** Students needing four credits for the class instead of three must complete the following additional assignment. Utilizing one book of the New Testament, develop a series of five sermons or Bible lessons (according to the student's own needs and preferences) suitable for use in ministry to a church congregation. The aim of this assignment is a product that is (a) useful in ministry, and (b) reflective of graduate level understanding of the social/cultural/historical/religious backgrounds of the New Testament world that enhance interpretation of New Testament literature. In this assignment students should demonstrate their ability to apply their understanding of the introductory and interpretive issues of the New Testament book(s) employed in this series of sermons/bible studies. Total length: 25 pages. DUE: August 20, 2004.

GRADING PROCEDURE

The final grade will be calculated according to the following formula:

Class Participation	5%
Reading Reflection Papers	25% (five 2-page papers @ 5% each)
Analysis and Application Papers	45% (three 5-page papers @ 15% each)
Final Exam	25%

Note: A separate grade will be submitted later for the 4th credit option.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR CLASS SESSIONS

Assignments for Session One, May 6

Reading:	<i>Exploring the New Testament World</i>	Chapters 1-2
	<i>Encountering the New Testament</i>	Chapters 1-2
	<i>Readings From the First-Century World</i>	Chapters 1-5
Writing:	Reading Reflection Paper #1	

Assignments for Session Two, May 13

Reading: The Gospels

Exploring the New Testament World Chapter 10

Encountering the New Testament Chapters 3-12

Readings From the First-Century World Chapter 6

Writing: Reading Reflection Paper #2

*Analysis and Application Paper #1: St. Paul wrote, “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son...” (Gal. 4:4). In light of what you know about the historical background and setting of 1st Century Judaism, analyze the readiness of the Jewish people for the appearance of the Messiah.

Assignments for Session Three, May 20

Reading: The Acts of the Apostles

Exploring the New Testament World Chapters 3-4, 9

Encountering the New Testament Chapters 13-16

Readings From the First-Century World Chapter 7

Writing: Reading Reflection Paper #3

*Analysis and Application Paper #2: Interpret a story that appears in two or more Gospels. Be sure to identify their similarities and differences, and explain how these differences reflect the unique purposes/perspectives of the authors and thus serve to enrich your understanding of the passages you are interpreting.

Assignments for Session Four, May 27

Reading: The Pauline Epistles

Exploring the New Testament World Chapters 5-8

Encountering the New Testament Chapters 17-21

Readings From the First-Century World Chapters 8-9

Writing: Reading Reflection Paper #4

*Analysis and Application Paper #3: Integrating your knowledge of (a) the world of the early Christians and (b) Luke’s theology of the Spirit, analyze the expansion of Christianity across the socio-religious barriers described in the Acts of the Apostles.

Assignments for Session Five, June 3

Reading: Hebrews, General Epistles, and Revelation

Encountering the New Testament Chapters 22-24

Readings From the First-Century World Chapters 10-11

Writing: Reading Reflection Paper #5

*Analysis and Application Paper #4: By interpreting a paragraph found in one of St. Paul’s letters, demonstrate how your knowledge of Greco-Roman society, religion and philosophy illuminates and enhances your understanding of the text.

**Only three Analysis and Application Papers required; omit any one of the four.*

Guidelines for Papers

Students should utilize the latest edition of Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) for formatting and style. Because this is the first course for this cohort in the Degree Completion Program, many will not be familiar with the proper use of this style manual, so we will use this as a learning opportunity for your first two weeks' assignments, with no reduction in grade for errors. However, it is required that you use standard white 8 1/2 x 11" paper, double-spaced and printed in Times New Roman (or near equivalent) 12-point font. Use standard margins of 1" on all sides, and do not "justify" the margins. Include page numbers at the bottom of the page, centered. The cover page is considered page 0 and does not count toward the number of pages in the assignment. Place your student ID number--not your name--along with course number and name, professor's name, and date on the cover page. Staple the pages together. Do not use any kind of cover for the papers.

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SPECIFIC DATA

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