

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
M.A.T.S. Degree Completion Program
Springfield, Missouri

BNTD 530 NEW TESTAMENT INTRODUCTION
May 10, 17, 24, 31, June 7, 2007
Thursday evening 6:00 – 10:00 pm
(3 Credits)

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Summer 2007

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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--GLOBAL

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, Acts, Pauline Epistles, General Epistles, and Johannine Literature (Gospel, Letters and Revelation).
5. Critique various recent approaches to New Testament interpretation, assessing both their positive contributions and limitations. (Understand the basics of various kinds of criticism, e.g. textual, historical, redaction, social-scientific, and rhetorical.)
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

deSilva, David A. *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods, and Ministry Formation*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004. 975 pp.

Ferguson, Everett. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993. 648 pp.

BASIC OUTLINE

- I. Environment of the New Testament: Jewish Backgrounds and Greco-Roman Society
 II. Establishment of the New Testament Church: Synoptic Gospels and Acts
 III. Exhortation to the New Testament Church: Pauline Epistles
 IV. Endurance and Hope of the New Testament Church: General Epistles, Johannine Literature

Session	Assignments	Outline
I. Environment of the New Testament	<p><u>Reading:</u> deSilva 37-144; Ferguson 48-147; 396-512</p> <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe the nature of the NT and its relation to the OT. 2. Understand the basics of the production of ancient Greek writings. 3. Appreciate the context of Jewish history and religion and Greco-Roman culture in the production of the NT. 4. Articulate the Jews' expectancy of a kingly Messiah in light of the political history of the Jewish nation in the Hellenistic Period. <p><u>Assessment:</u> Quiz #1</p>	<p>A. Prolegomena</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meaning of "Testament" 2. Content and Character of the New Testament 3. Relationship of the Old and New Testaments 4. The Language and Production of New Testament Books <p>B. Jewish History, Religion and Literature Between the Testaments</p> <p>C. Greco-Roman Culture and Society of the 1st Century</p>
II. Establishment of the New Testament Church	<p><u>Reading:</u> deSilva 145-390; Ferguson 513-582</p> <p><u>Writing:</u> Analysis and Application Paper #1</p> <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify the various expressions of Judaism in 1st Century Palestine reflected in the NT. 2. Describe the literary genre of "gospel" and the origination of the Gospels. 3. Use a synopsis of the Gospels to compare and explain differences in the theological perspectives of Matthew, Mark and Luke. 4. Discuss the value of historical narrative for 	<p>A. Jewish Sects, Practices and Institutions in the Time of Jesus</p> <p>B. Theological Narratives of the Life and Ministry of Christ</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Synoptic Problem 2. The Synoptic Gospels: Mark, Matthew, Luke <p>C. Theological Narrative of the Expansion of the Church</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acts of the Apostles 2. The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke

	<p>the development of theology.</p> <p>5. Articulate the relationship between Luke and Acts, and your understanding of its charismatic theology.</p> <p><u>Assessment:</u> Quiz #2</p>	
III. Exhortation to the New Testament Church	<p><u>Reading:</u> deSilva 475-775</p> <p><u>Writing:</u> Analysis and Application Paper #2</p> <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand the literary genre of “epistle” and how it came to be dominant in the NT. 2. Explain the tools and methods by which apostles wrote letters. 3. Describe the form of epistles and the steps involved in interpreting epistles. 4. Identify the major themes in Paul’s letters. 5. Evaluate theories of how the Pauline corpus was compiled. 6. Discuss the issue of the presence and possible implications of pseudepigrapha in the NT. <p><u>Assessment:</u> Quiz #3</p>	<p>A. The Genre of “Epistle”</p> <p>B. Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity</p> <p>C. Interpreting Epistles</p> <p>D. Paul’s Epistles</p> <p>E. Epistolary Pseudepigrapha? A Case Study in the Pastoral Epistles</p> <p>F. The Collection of Paul’s Letters</p>
IV. Endurance & Hope of the NT Church	<p><u>Reading:</u> deSilva 776-884; Ferguson 583-620</p> <p><u>Writing:</u> Analysis and Application Paper #3</p> <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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. 2. Understand pagan attitudes toward Christians that led to persecution 3. Appreciate the epistolary exhortations of the NT that encourage Christians to be steadfast and faithful in the face of internal and external threats. <p><u>Assessment:</u> Quiz #4</p>	<p>A. Greco-Roman Religions that Christian Encountered in the 1st Century</p> <p>B. Hindrances/Rivals to Christian Religion, and Persecution of Christians</p> <p>C. “General Epistles” of Hebrews, James, Peter, and Jude</p>
V. Endurance & Hope of the NT Church (Cont’d.)	<p><u>Reading:</u> deSilva 391-474; 885-932; 29-35</p> <p><u>Writing:</u> Analysis and Application Paper #4</p> <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Articulate the major views on Johannine authorship. 2. Describe the basic tenets of NT scholarship with respect to the Community of John as the background for his writings. 3. Compare and contrast John’s Gospel with the Synoptics. 4. Identify the themes of John’s epistles. 	<p>A. John’s Community</p> <p>B. John’s Literature: Gospel, Letters, and Revelation</p> <p>C. Formation and Preservation of the New Testament Canon</p>

	<p>5. Understand the literary genre of “apocalypse” and the essential meaning and message of John’s Revelation.</p> <p>6. Explain how the NT books were recognized as authoritative and were preserved.</p> <p><u>Assessment:</u> Final Exam</p>	
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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

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 and #3 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 reading assignments, which are to be completed prior to the designated class session. Each student must submit a reading report at the end of the course that logs all class reading by author, book, date, time, and pages read. A reading report form will be provided.
3. **Quizzes:** The professor may administer quizzes at the end of the class period covering assigned readings and information discussed in the class. Advance completion of assigned readings will be significant in preparation for and understanding of class presentations.
4. **Analysis and Application Papers:** Each student must submit four Analysis and Application Papers, each of which is to be five pages in length. Late Penalty: 5% per class period.
 - a. 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.
 - b. Paper #2: Interpret a story that appears in two or more Synoptic 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.

- c. 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.
- d. 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.

5. **Final Exam:** This exam, covering the contents of two of the textbooks and materials given in class during the first four sessions, will be given during the fifth and final session.

GRADING PROCEDURE

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

➤ Reading Log	10%
➤ Analysis and Application Papers	40%
➤ Quizzes	25%
➤ Final Exam	25%
➤ [Class Participation	10%]

Prompt and timely completion of assignments is essential to the degree completion program. Late work will be accepted only by pre-arrangement with the professor and only on sufficient grounds. Late work submitted beyond agreed-upon dates, if accepted, may be penalized by one letter grade per week late. The professor reserves the right to allocate 10% of the grade for participation, raising or lowering for significant lapses or contributions.

NOTE: A \$30.00 fee will be charged to the student's account for every grade change even if the instructor has approved an extension for completing the work. Any exception to the policy will be made by the registrar.

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SPECIFIC DATA

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