ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
BNT 530 New Testament Introduction

James D. Hernando, Ph. D Spring, 2003

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

Required:

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

Recommended:

Black, D.A., and D.S. Dockery eds. *New Testament Criticism and Interpretation.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991. (out of print, but worth having)

Carson, D.A., Moo, D., and Morris, L. *An Introduction to the New Testament.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.

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

Ferguson, Everett. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity.* Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans, 1987.

Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Introduction.* 4th rev. ed. Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1970, 1990.

BASIC OUTLINE

I. The World of the New Testament
   A. Judaism and the Graeco-Roman World
   B. Historical Survey
   C. Social and Cultural Survey
   D. Religious Survey

II. The Methods of New Testament Interpretation
   A. The New Testament and the Historical Critical Method - Historical Sketch
   B. Introducing and Evaluating Interpretative Methods or Types of Criticisms
      1. Textual Criticism
      2. Literary-Source Criticism

3. Form Criticism
4. Redaction Criticism
5. Types of Literary Criticism

III. The Literature of the New Testament: Introducing the New Testament Itself and Attendant Introductory Issues

A. The Synoptic Gospels
B. Luke-Acts
C. John's Gospel and Epistles
D. The Pauline Corpus
E. The Epistle to the Hebrews
F. The General Epistles - James, 1-2 Peter, Jude
G. Revelation
H. New Testament Apocrypha and the Question of the New Testament Canon

METHODOLOGY

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

1. Classroom lecture
2. Guided classroom discussion of issues related to assigned reading, lectures and class assignments.
3. Individual reading, research and writing.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attendance** at all class sessions is expected. [Whenever possible absences should be announced beforehand to the professor.] Excessive absenteeism is defined by the AGTS catalog and may result in a grade reduction.

2. Completion of the assigned **reading** in the course textbooks.

3. A **critical book review** of Lee Strobel's *A Case For Jesus*, plus written responses on the selected **reflection questions**.

4. **Research Project**: ONE of the following: (See handouts)

    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

5. Mid-term Exam
6. Final Exam

Note: Work turned late without the prior permission of the professor will receive a grade reduction of 1/2 letter grade for every day late.

GRADING PROCEDURE

1. Grade Weights:

		points	%
a. *Reading - Essay Project*			
Critical Book Review	100	"	= 10%
Reflection Questions		100	" = 10%
b. *Research Project* (3 choices)	200	"	= 20%
Project Description Paper			
OR			
Historical Backgrounds Project			
OR			
Glossary Project			
c. *Required Readings*	100	"	= 10%
d. *Class participation* *	50	"	= 5%
e. *Mid-term Exam*	200	"	= 20%
f. *Final Exam*	250	"	= 25%

2. The total number of possible points to be earned in the semester is 1000. Point totals at the end of the semester are tabulated and a grading curve plotted relative to the collective grade profile of the class.

* *In addition to class attendance students are expected to have read the required reading in the texts for each class session and to show evidence of class preparation by actively participating in classroom discussion and asking appropriate questions.*

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.

Bruce, F. F. *New Testament History*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1972.

Cadbury, H. J. *The Making of Luke-Acts*. 2nd ed. London: SPCK, 1958, 1968.

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LaSor, W. S. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972.

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Lohse, Eduard. *The New Testament Environment*. Translated by John E.Steely. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976.

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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.

Vermes, Geza. *Jesus The Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels*. London: Collins, 1976.

SPECIFIC DATA

Prepared by James D. Hernando, Ph. D., December 9, 2002