



BLUE RIDGE INSTITUTE

FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

NT508: GOSPELS

Lynchburg Campus
Location: Rivermont EPC; Room 206
Monday Evenings 6:30–8:30pm
Jan 28—May 6 (Spring 2019)

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Course Description

The history of redemption climaxes at the life, death, and resurrection of the Messiah. And therefore, the story of Scripture reaches its apex in the four Gospel accounts of Jesus. In order for the student to properly understand the New Testament overall as well as the four accounts specifically, attention is given to the genre of “gospel,” each writer’s literary art, historicity of the accounts, theological teaching, pastoral purpose, and message for today’s church and world.

Course Objectives

- 1) Given the necessity for Christians to properly understand Scripture, the students are to familiarize themselves with the contents of the four Gospel accounts.
- 2) For the sake of proper interpretation, the students are to gain acquaintance with the main theories of authorship, origin, and compositional relationship of the Gospels.
- 3) Because liberal theology and higher criticism has infiltrated the church, students are to understand and evaluate, discerningly, the main lines of historical criticism of the four Gospel accounts in the modern period.
- 4) Given the continuity of the Bible, students are to understand the main elements of the message of Jesus, revealed in word and deed, as reflected in the unified witness of the four Gospel accounts.
- 5) While harmonizing has been a popular way to treat the four accounts, it is vital for the students to recognize the distinctive emphases of each of the four Gospel accounts, and the implications of their diversity for interpretation and proclamation.
- 6) Given that all Scripture is both inspired and profitable, the students are to grow in personal responsiveness to the Gospel’s message of faith, repentance, humility, obedience, joy, etc. in order to bring such piety and knowledge to the benefit of the church.

Required Texts

- 1) An English Bible (preferably ESV, NASB, or NKJV; GNT for those who have taken Greek)
- 2) Kruger, Michael J. ed. *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospel Realized*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2016.
{Though this text retails at \$40, it will be used in the remaining 3 New Testament courses as well }
- 3) Strauss, Mark L. *Four Portraits, One Jesus: A Survey of Jesus and the Gospels*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007.

Course Assignments

- 1) **Assigned Reading**—Complete all assigned reading including all 4 gospel accounts, both textbooks, as well as any journal articles the professor will assign. See “Course Schedule” for textbook reading completion dates. Completion of reading will be demonstrated through classroom participation and preparedness as well as appearing on workbook assignments.
- 2) **Exams**—This course will consist of a Mid-Term Exam and a Final Exam. All exams will be open book/notes exams.
- 3) **Research Paper**—Write a 10-12 page paper. Choose any topic below for research papers. The student must receive approval from the professor in order to proceed:
 - a. *Exegesis Paper*: Write an exegetical paper on a passage of your choosing from the Gospel accounts.
 - b. *Interpretations Paper*: Write a paper on a controversial and divided passage from any of the four Gospel accounts. Include the various popular interpretations as well as argue for which you believe to be the correct one.
 - c. *Theology Paper*: Write a paper on a specific theological theme that is developed and emphasized in one particular Gospel account (e.g. temple in John or new exodus in Mark).
 - d. *Introductory/Background Paper*: Write a paper that deals with one of the many and sundry background matters (e.g. authorship, canonicity, date, etc.).
 - e. *General Topic Paper*: Write a paper that deals with any other topic that has not been mentioned above. Issues such as the “synoptic problem,” OT use in the Gospel accounts, oral tradition, historicity of the accounts, the historical Jesus, or supposed contradictions are just a few examples.

Course Lecture & Reading Schedule: [Schedule is subject to adapt as necessary]

Wk	Date	Reading	Lecture A	Lecture B
1	Jan 29	Strauss, chs. 4–6	Intro; Historical Backgrounds	Historical Backgrounds Cont.
2	Feb 4	Strauss, chs. 1, 11–12	Genre of “gospel”	Quest for the Historical Jesus
3	Feb 11	Str. chs. 2–3; Kr. app. C	Finish Quest; Critical Approaches to Gospels	Critical Approaches & Synoptic Problem
4	Feb 18		<i>Spring Break</i>	<i>Spring Break</i>
5	Feb 25	Str. ch. 13; Kr. app. A-B	Canonicity	Preservation
6	Mar 4	Kr. ch. 1; Str. ch. 8;	Why 4 Accounts (not more or less)	Matthew: Background & Structure
7	Mar 11	Str. chs. 14–15	Matthew: Theology, Themes, & Distinctive Features	Matthew: Important Passages
8	Mar 18	Str. ch. 16	Matthew: Important Passages	Matthew: Important Passages {Mid-Term Exam}
9	Mar 25	Kr. ch. 2; Str. ch. 7	Mark: Background & Structure	Mark: Theology, Themes, & Distinctive Features
10	Apr 1	Str. ch. 17–18	Mark: Important Passages	Mark: Important Passages
11	Apr 8	Kr. ch. 3; Str., ch. 9	Mark: Important Passages	Luke: Background & Structure {Research Paper (RD) due}
12	Apr 15	Str., chs. 19–20	Luke: Theology, Themes, & Distinctive Features	Luke: Important Passages
13	Apr 22	Kr. ch. 4; Str., ch. 10	Luke: Important Passages	John: Background & Structure {Research Paper (FC) due}
14	Apr 29	Make-up	John: Theology, Themes, & Distinctive Features	John: Important Passages
15	May 6	Make-up	John: Important Passages	John: Important Passages {Final Exam: Take-Home due May 13}

Grading Weights:

- 1) Classroom Participation and Preparedness—5%
- 2) Reading—15%
- 3) Mid-Term Exam—25%
- 4) Research Paper (RD)—5%
- 5) Research Paper (FC)—25%
- 6) Final Exam—25%

Course Procedures & Policies:

- 1) For all matters of procedures and policies, please see the BRITE catalog pp. 36–40 (<https://www.brite-va.org/brite-catalog/>). For all other matters, see below.
- 2) Lecture and note-taking are not the only components of this course, *but they are rather important*. Additionally, questions, dialogue, and discussion are highly encouraged in Mr. Decker’s class. In fact, one’s participation and ability to interact well with others may be the difference between a letter grade (B+ to a A-). This subjective component is left to the professor’s discretion (see “Grading Weights” #1 above). However, students are always expected to interact with the professor and each other in a respectful manner.
- 3) Reading is mostly preparatory and expected to be completed prior to the start of the class as scheduled in the syllabus.
- 4) Late work policy. Unless *pre*-approved by the professor or extreme providential prevention (illness or death in family), a 5% reduction per day past due will be incurred for the late assignment.
- 5) Make-up quizzes and exams are available in specific cases as long as the excuse has been pre-approved. However, it is the responsibility to seek out the professor and arrange the time and place for the make-up quiz or exam.
- 6) Because this is a Christian institution that seeks to glorify Christ academically; cheating, plagiarizing, and disrespect will result in automatic disciplinary action according to the standards outlined in the catalog and administered by those in charge of the student oversight at BRITE.
- 7) Extra-credit is offered as a case-by-case basis. It will consist of writing more research papers.
- 8) The professor holds the right to change/modify/amend the syllabus as needed.

Evaluation Criteria:

- 1) *Textbook Reading*: Completion of reading will be demonstrated through classroom participation and preparedness as well as appearing on quizzes and exams. A reading report must also be submitted at the end of the class.
- 2) *Exams*: These exams will for the most part be short answer questions. They will all be open book & notes take-home exams and on average can take anywhere from 5-10 hours to complete. *The goal will be for the student not to regurgitate reading and classroom material but rather to synthesize and deliver the material in the student's own words demonstrating understanding and precision.*
- 3) *Research Paper Rubric*: Form and content are important aspects that will be considered for your grade.
 - a. Form: The student is expected to follow the BRITE's Style Sheet as closely as possible (see: <https://www.brite-va.org/academic-resources/>). Starting at 10 percentage points; for every 2 grammar, spelling, punctuation, and general writing style or formatting errors will result in a 1% reduction. However, I will stop reducing after 20 errors (10%) since that reduces the paper 1 letter grade.
 - b. Content: Will consist of the remaining 90% of the paper. Quality of argument, depth of research, amount and quality of citations, and accuracy of content are the major components of a good essay. It should be well presented, including an introduction, *a clear thesis statement*, body, and summary conclusion.
 - c. A rough draft (RD) is due April 8 so as to be sure the professor can help with formatting issues as well as assist the student to write a quality final draft (FD).
 - d. Please watch the "BRITE Tutorials" videos to help improve and simplify the writing process:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLM5TRru23QxIQo_VBKLB9JmIdh42uHe2s.
 - e. To aid the research process, please avail yourself to BRITE's resource of open access journals and search tools (see: <https://www.brite-va.org/academic-resources/>).
 - f. See the professor for any questions or additional help. He is able to provide formatting assistance as well as providing access to journal articles you may find but cannot retrieve. You are welcome to borrow anything from his personal library as well:
<http://www.librarything.com/catalog/timotheoslibrary>.

Bibliography (Recommended Reading in bold):

New Testament Introduction

Burge, Gary M., Gene L. Green, and Lynn H. Cohick. *The New Testament in Antiquity*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.*

Carson, D. A., and Douglas J. Moo. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.*

deSilva, David A. *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods & Ministry Formation*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2004.*

Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Introduction*. 4th rev. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1990.*

Köstenberger, Andrae J., L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles. *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009.*

Lea, Thomas, and David Alan Black. *The New Testament: Its Background and Message*. 2nd ed. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2003.*

New Testament Theology

Beale, G. K. *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.*

Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Theology*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1981.*

Hasel, Gerhard. *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978.*

Ladd, George Eldon. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Rev. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.*

Marshall, I. Howard. *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014.*

Morris, Leon. *New Testament Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.

Schreiner, Thomas R. *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.

Thielman, Frank S. *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.*

New Testament Backgrounds

Evans, Craig A. *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.*

Ferguson, Everett. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.*

Green, Joel B., and Lee Martin McDonald, eds. *The World of the New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013.*

Jeffers, James S. *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1999.*

Scott Jr., J. Julius. *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995.*

Wright, N. T. *The New Testament and the People of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.*

Theology of Each Account

Bauckham, Richard. *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015.

Bayer, Hans F. *A Theology of Mark: The Dynamic Between Christology and Authentic Discipleship*. Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2012.*

Bock, Darrell L. *A Theology of Luke and Acts: God's Promised Program, Realized for All Nations*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.

Garland, David E. *A Theology of Mark's Gospel: Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015.

Hays, Richard B. *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2018.

———. ***Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014.***

Köstenberger, Andreas J. *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son of God*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.*

Quarles, Charles L. *A Theology of Matthew: Jesus Revealed As Deliverer, King, and Incarnate Creator*. Explorations in Biblical Theology edition. Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2013.*

Gospels Overviews

Alexander, T. Desmond. *Discovering Jesus: Why Four Gospels to Portray One Person?* Wheaton: Crossway, 2010.*

Bird, Michael F. *The Gospel of the Lord: How the Early Church Wrote the Story of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014.

Blomberg, Craig L. *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey, Second Edition*. 2nd ed. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009.*

Dunn, James D. G. *Jesus Remembered*. Vol. 1 of *Christianity in the Making*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.*

Pennington, Jonathan T. *Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012.*

Watson, Francis. *The Fourfold Gospel: A Theological Reading of the New Testament Portraits of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016.

Wenham, David, and Steve Walton. *Exploring the New Testament: A Guide to the Gospels & Acts*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016.*

Wright, N. T. *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Vol. 2 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.*

Historical Jesus and Reliability of the Gospels

Barnett, Paul W. *Jesus and the Logic of History*. NSBT. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2001.*

Bauckham, Richard. *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.*

———, ed. *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

Bird, Michael F., Dr Craig A. Evans, Simon Gathercole, Charles E. Hill, and Chris Tilling. *How God Became Jesus: The Real Origins of Belief in Jesus' Divine Nature—A Response to Bart D. Ehrman*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.

Blomberg, Craig L. *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues & Commentary*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011.*

———. *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007.*

Bock, Darrell L. *Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.

Eddy, Paul Rhodes, and Gregory A. Boyd. *The Jesus Legend: A Case for the Historical Reliability of the Synoptic Jesus Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.

Köstenberger, Andreas J., and Michael J. Kruger. *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture's Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010.*

Licona, Michael R. *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2010.*

Williams, Peter J. *Can We Trust the Gospels?* Wheaton: Crossway, 2018.*

Wright, N. T. *The Resurrection of the Son of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.*

Synoptic Problem and Related

Black, David Alan. *Why Four Gospels?* 2nd ed. Gonzalez, FL: Energion Publications, 2010.

Black, David Alan, and David R. Beck, eds. *Rethinking the Synoptic Problem*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.*

Goodacre, Mark. *The Synoptic Problem: A Way through the Maze*. London: T&T Clark, 2004.

Porter, Stanley E., and Bryan R. Dyer, eds. *The Synoptic Problem: Four Views*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016.

Powers, B. Ward. *The Progressive Publication of Matthew*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010.*

Stein, Robert H. *Studying the Synoptic Gospels: Origin and Interpretation*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.

**indicates the professor owns the book in his personal library and is willing to loan.*

Commentaries

For a good (albeit fallible) list, see www.bestcommentaries.com.

Also check Ligonier's "Top Commentaries of Every Book of the Bible":
(<https://www.ligonier.org/blog/top-commentaries-on-every-book-of-the-bible/>)

As well as Tim Challies blog "Best Commentaries on Each Book of the Bible":
(<https://www.challies.com/best-commentaries-on-each-book-of-the-bible/>)