

NT2022 — New Testament I: Gospels and Acts
Birmingham Theological Seminary (Huntsville Campus)
Westminster Presbyterian Church, 5744 Oakwood Rd. NW 35811
and/or
The Village Church, 2103 Virginia Blvd. NW 35811

SYLLABUS
Fall Semester 2019

Lecturer: Johnathan Harris
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Class Dates: Sept 7, Oct 5, Nov 2, Nov 23
Class Time: Saturday, 9am–3pm
(with 1 hour for lunch and two breaks)

COURSE PURPOSE

The purpose of this course is to introduce the students to the four canonical Gospels — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John — and the Acts of the Apostles. Students will become familiar with the historical, literary, and theological background to the New Testament and first century Christianity; the key critical issues pertaining to Gospel and narrative study in general, each Gospel and Acts in particular; and the relation between the Gospels. Focus will be directed especially to the historical, exegetical, and theological content of the Gospels and Acts with a view toward using the Scriptures well in life and vocation.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Grow in their familiarity with the content of the Gospels and Acts.
- Be able to discuss critical issues pertaining to the Gospels and Acts.
- Be able to discern the unique witness of each Gospel (and Acts) and its contribution to one's articulation of the single gospel.
- Be able to summarize and articulate the theological witness of the Gospels and Acts and its importance for the church today.

COURSE TEXT(S)

Required Text:

Köstenberger, Andreas J., L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles. *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament*. 2nd ed. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016. Denoted throughout the syllabus as *CCC*.

Recommended Reading:

Bauckham, Richard. *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017.

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

Dunn, James D. G. *Beginning from Jerusalem*. Vol. 2 of *Christianity in the Making*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS and GRADING

1. **THESES/PARTICIPATION (20% of total grade; 5% each):** In preparation for each class session, each student will formulate a set of 4–6 “theses” that interact with the assigned textbook reading (certificate students should prepare 2–3 theses). These should be written in proper English, 12 point Times New Roman font, singled-spaced (an extra space between theses is nice though). They should be *printed* and *brought to class*. (They will be collected at the end of each session.)

Each thesis will begin with a clear, succinct thesis statement (one sentence) that interacts with a *substantial* point from the reading, followed by a paragraph further elaborating or explaining the claim of the thesis. (The theses assume that you have read the assigned portion of the text in totality.) While some of the theses may take the form of pure *description* (e.g., “Köstenberger et al. believe/argue/say that ...”), at least *two* theses should involve *evaluation* (e.g., “Köstenberger et al. rightly/wrongly argue ...”) and *two* should involve *implication and/or application* (e.g., “Köstenberger et al. helpfully confront our contemporary ...”). Evaluation entails your making a claim or judgment about the reading, whether positive or negative, and giving reasons for your judgment. Do any research required to support your claim. Implication/application entails your bringing the reading to bear on the contemporary situation of the church, world, etc. The theses will be presented in class as we cover the material about which each thesis is written. You may think of these as preparatory work to ensure our conversation is an enriching one to which each member of the class contributes.

2. **PAPERS and OUTLINES (40% of total grade; 10% each):** Each student (excepting certificate students, who are not required to do the paper and outlines) will select a single text of appropriate teachable length (i.e., generally speaking between a paragraph and a chapter in length, though in certain cases it may be shorter or longer) from the assigned biblical reading and write a hybrid exegetical-theological-reflection paper. The paper should be 4–6 *double-spaced (Times New Roman, 12 point font) pages long* (i.e., about the length of a sermon manuscript) and should treat the chosen text within its immediate literary context as well as its canonical context. Based on the plain sense of the text, it should engage the text on three levels: theology (i.e., what does this text teach us about

God, the person/work of Christ, the nature of the world and humans, etc.); ethics (i.e., how ought one live because of the truth to which this text witnesses); and the Christian hope (i.e., in what way does this text drive one to hope and encourage one on to perseverance). The paper should not be structured woodenly around those topics; they are not intended as paper headings. Rather, you should think of this paper more as a sermon without any of the (otherwise necessary!) homiletical “extras” (e.g., introduction, illustrations, stories, jokes). Rooted in, dialoging with, and growing out of the chosen text, your paper should teach the head (theology), direct the hands (ethics), and spur on the heart (hope) of your readers/hearers.

Each paper should be accompanied by a corresponding outline. The outline may be structured exegetically or homiletically, but in either case include scriptural references. The final draft of the paper and outline should be emailed to the professor within two weeks after each class session, Saturday at 8pm. However, *bring an initial draft of the outline to class*. This will require that some significant initial thought has been given to your text in preparation for class. I hope, as time permits, to have students share their outlines and offer a brief summary of their initial thoughts and findings. This should facilitate group reflection on the text and, it is hoped, contribute positively to your final paper. The principle I wish to engender in this process is that scriptural interpretation is and should never be something we do in isolation but always as members of the community of Christ’s church. As we prepare to stand before God’s people, we should surround ourselves with others who can speak into our lives and shape our teaching.

3. **EXAMS (40% of total grade; 10% each):** After each class session, an exam will be emailed to the class (no later than Sunday night at midnight) made up mostly of short answer and essay questions to be completed and emailed to the professor by the following Saturday at 8pm. The exam will cover the most important points from the reading and class time and should be completed *without the aid of the textbook*.

BTS FORMAT AND STYLE STANDARDS

BTS uses the Turabian style of formatting as a standard for papers. However, students should regard individual professor preferences if they communicate any variance in outlining their requirements for papers. Professors retain discretion in determining how “formal” a paper must be. In this technological age, information is readily available; make sure that you understand about giving reference sources the proper recognition. Please refer to the BTS Student Handbook section on plagiarism for guidance.

COURSE CALENDAR

Class number and date	Reading from <i>CCC</i>	Reading from Scripture
Class #1 (9/7)	pp. 63–113: Political/Religious Background of the NT pp. 116–53: Historical Jesus pp. 272–304: Gospel of Mark	Mark
Class #2 (10/5)	pp. 154–221: Jesus & Relation of the Gospels pp. 222–71: Gospel of Matthew	Matthew
Class #3 (11/2)	pp. 305–43: Gospel of Luke pp. 390–436: Book of Acts	Luke and Acts
Class #4 (11/23)	pp. 2–62: Nature/Scope of Scripture pp. 344–87: Gospel of John	John

CLASS SUMMARY/DESCRIPTION

In preparation for class, you should:

- Read the assigned text of *CCC*.
- Read the assigned biblical text.
- Prepare a set of theses interacting with *CCC*.
- Prepare an initial outline of a selected biblical text, with sufficient forethought to summarize the passage under the above stated guidelines

During the class, we will:

- In the first part of class cover the more “theoretical” material from *CCC*. It is here where most, if not all, of the theses will be presented and discussed.
- In the second part of class cover the biblical text, including historical critical, literary, and theological topics. It is here where discussion of the outlines will take place.

After class, you will:

- Take and return by email the exam within one week.
- Email final drafts of your paper and outline within two weeks.

*****CERTIFICATE STUDENTS** will complete the reading of *CCC* and Scripture, prepare 2–3 theses, and will take the exams.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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