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BS 501 Introduction to Biblical Studies I

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ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Area of Biblical Studies

BS501 3 hours
INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL STUDIES--1

David L. Thompson
Fall 2006

I. GENERAL COURSE DESCRIPTION

The two-course sequence of BS 501-502 comprises three interrelated sections: (1) an introduction to the concept and significance of the canon of Scripture, the discipline of hermeneutics, and a contextual, text-centered approach to biblical interpretation; (2) an introduction to the Old Testament in its historical, literary, and canonical contexts; and (3) an introduction to the New Testament in its historical, literary, and canonical contexts.

Course participation, reading, and projects will be configured in part so as to reflect the character of the degree specializations represented among the course participants. In order to achieve credit for either course, the full, two-course sequence must be completed successfully. Required of all M.A. except for those in Biblical Studies. BS 501 focuses on the Old Testament.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

- A. The student will trace the development of canonization, discuss the meaning and significance of the canon and of canonicity, especially the canon and canonicity of the Old Testament, and articulate the major issues involved in the relationship between the testaments.

The student will become conversant, in at least a basic and rudimentary way, with the historical background of the Bible, including the historical setting of the biblical story, and especially the story of the Old Testament, and the critical historical issues surrounding the production of the various Old Testament books, and will demonstrate the ability to make appropriate use of this historical information in the interpretation of the biblical text.

- B. The student will be conversant with the major issues in hermeneutics (i.e., will be able to identify these issues, articulate the main contemporary positions surrounding these issues, and present in a reasonable and informed fashion his/her own perspective regarding these issues), and will demonstrate the ability to make use of these hermeneutical insights in the actual interpretation and appropriation of the Old Testament text. Among these hermeneutical issues will be the role of the cultural placement of the reader in the process of interpretation and application and the importance of exposure to multicultural perspectives for understanding of the text.

- C. The student will demonstrate, in at least a basic and rudimentary way, the ability to observe, interpret, and apply the Old Testament text, and to show the

- significance of this interpretation and application of the biblical text for the tasks of his/her ministerial vocation. Specifically, the student will (a) identify the macrostructure of a biblical book (including the structural development of the book in terms of its units and sub-nits, and major structural dynamics within the book) and will show the significance of these insights for the interpretation of the Old Testament text; (b) engage in a “close reading” of individual passages so as to make relevant observations useful for interpretation; (c) employ various kinds of exegetical determinants, e.g., context, word usage, historical background, literary genre, the history of interpretation for the interpretation of the Old Testament text; (d) move from interpretation of the Old Testament passage to specific and creative application to contemporary Christian life, including the exemplifying of principles that must be kept in mind in the use of the Old Testament for Christian application.
- D. The student will show how the teachings of individual passages within the Old Testament contribute to the flow of biblical revelation in the large, and will trace, in at least a general way, the development of major biblical themes and motifs throughout the whole of Scripture so as to articulate a biblical theology of these major themes and motifs.
- E. The student will demonstrate rudimentary ability to integrate the study of the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, to is/her vocation.

Course Emphases. Three major streams of instruction converge to form the BS501 experience: (1) critical introduction to the study of the Old Testament and its historical, cultural environment; (2) hermeneutics (i.e., the study of human communication, in this case through ancient written documents); and (3) inductive biblical studies which amount to applied hermeneutics, emphasizing skill and craft development in the close reading and redemptive use of the Old Testament. The first two we will approach through assigned reading and discussion. The last we will engage through our own direct work with the Old Testament text.

III. REQUIRED TEXTS AND COURSE MATERIALS

A. Required Texts

Bauer, David R. An Annotated Guide to Biblical Resources for Ministry. Hendrickson, 2003.

Drane, John Introducing the Old Testament. Completely revised and updated. Fortress Press, 2001. Abbreviated IOT in the syllabus.

Revised Standard Version of the Bible or New American Standard Bible or some other contemporary, formal (vs. dynamic) equivalence translation with minimal editorial clutter in the layout. NRSV and NIV are also fine.

Thompson, David L. Bible Study That Works. Revised edition. Nappanee, IN: Evangel Press, 1994. Gives a brief, non-technical overview of approach to “inductive biblical studies” commended by the class. (= BSTW)

B. Required Access to Reference Materials: You will from time to time need to use one of the following multi-volume Bible encyclopedia sets. No substitutes are permitted. Except those in *iPreach* (see below). You do not have to own these, though they are a worthy addition to your library. Often one or the other is available in public libraries. The Asbury Bookstore can facilitate purchase should you wish to do so, as well as other dealers in theological books.

• ***The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. New York: Doubleday, 1992. 6 Volumes. Also available on CD-ROM for Windows or PowerPC Macs running a Wintel emulation program.**

• ***The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised Edition*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979-1988. 4 Volumes.**

In addition to these, a very fine supplementary resource is the *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 5 vols; ed. W. Van Gemeren, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

Acceptable Bible dictionaries and biblical commentaries are also available on-line in *iPreach*, an exceptionally valuable on-line tool. Go on line to <www.asburyseminar.edu>: Information Commons (library), log in, and find *iPreach* in the first list headed by the "Catalog."

C. Acknowledgements. I want to acknowledge here my debt to Dr. Lawson G. Stone, my colleague and friend in the area of Biblical Studies at Asbury Seminary, for permission to use his OT Tapestries and selected other materials. Dr. Stone is professor of Old Testament. He and I collaborated in teaching the first sections of BS501 offered on campus some time ago. At that time, I found his "tapestries" an invaluable outline of a thoughtful, evangelical, critical approach to matters germane to study of the Old Testament. With his permission I am using his tapestries again this fall. Thanks also to Dr. Sandra Richter, also an Old Testament colleague here at Asbury, for permission to reproduce and use her excellent chart on OT Chronology. Thanks also to Dr. Joseph Dongell for use of his helpful work on literary structure.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Attendance. Attendance is very important in this particular class in order to achieve the integration desired. A "no-fault" attendance policy applies which does not distinguish "excused" and "unexcused" absences. Class participation is the point. Students can earn up to 5% of their grade for attendance. Every absence counts 1 percentage point against that total. Each point can be retrieved by completing a make-up assignment. It is the student's responsibility to make sure his or her name is recorded on the attendance sheet, and also to initiate make-up process for any absence whose points they wish to retrieve. The make-up will normally involve a 500 word critical interaction with some part of the week's readings.

B. Readings. The class requires reading of all texts and materials as assigned. (See Calendar.) Essays and an examination will provide accountability for all readings

except the initial assignment of *Bible Study That Works*. In this case students will write a 600 word critical interaction with BSTW, listing and then briefly elaborating (1) three important learnings gained from the reading, and (2) three important hermeneutical and/or theological questions raised for you by the book. Due at class time, 9/12. The interaction counts 5% of semester grade.

- C. Essays. Two integrative essays will put to work your thoughtful attention to the assigned readings in John Drane's *IOT*. The essays are due 9/21 and 11/30 and count 15% each toward the semester's grade. Essays will use double space, standard margins and heading, 12 pt font, no less than four full pages, no more than five pages in length. Standard English and correct grammar required.

We will divide the readings in *IOT* into five sections of the Old Testament's big story defined and grouped as follows:

Group A

- Creation through Joseph. *IOT*, chs. 1–3, 9–13
- Exodus and Conquest. *IOT*, chs. 1–3, 9–13
- Judges through Solomon. *IOT*, chs. 1–4, 9–13

Group B

- Divided monarchy through fall of Jerusalem. *IOT*, chs. 4–13.
- Exile and Restoration/Post Exilic period. *IOT*, chs. 4–13.

Essay #1. Select from Group A one major section of the OT story. Discuss John Drane's integrative presentation of a) biblical content, b) critical study of issues pertinent to the major section selected, and c) related cultural-historical data. Show how Drane's presentation helps a serious Christian reader better understand and appropriate the First Testament. All the chapters of *IOT* cited for each section will be considered germane to the essay, but your essay should demonstrate familiarity with specific examples of Drane's work in chapters particularly related to the section of OT story you have chosen. Due at class time, 9/21.

Essay #2. Select a major section from Group 2 and Discuss Drane's presentation following the instructions given for Essay #1. Due at class time, 11/30.

- D. Exam. An exam administered 11/02 will test familiarity with major events, dates, persons and their correlations in the historical-cultural context of the Old Testament. Particular attention should be paid to the integrative chronological charts scattered throughout *IOT* and also to Dr. Richter's chronological chart. The exam counts 10% of the semester grade.
- E. Inductive Bible studies. We will use seven lessons as a laboratory for hands-on practice of inductive Bible study. We will devote weeks 4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13 and 14 (i.e., finals day) to these studies. These will be due on Tuesdays of these weeks and will be integrated with the readings and other class discussion being carried

on as well. You will find directions for doing these lessons in the weekly assignment folder. The lessons will be 50% of the semester grade: lessons 1–4, 5% each; lessons 5–7, 10% each.

V. ON-LINE LEARNING SPACE

On-line Resources. As soon as possible in the first week a course icon for BS501A will appear on your First Class desktop in the ATS email system. This will serve several purposes for the class as a whole, so you should check it often.

- Course materials will be posted here for download, printing, or other use.
- Announcements and other time/assignment specific information will be posted here.
- You will post some assignments here, especially the opening interaction with BSTW.

VI. GRADE COMPONENTS AND GRADING INFORMATION

A. Grade Components and Calculation

- *Bible Study That Works* interaction, 5%
- Essay #1, 15%
- Essay #2, 15%.
- History Exam, 10%
- IBS Lessons 1-4, 20%
- IBS Lessons, 5-7, 30%.
- Attendance, 5%.

GRADE & PERCENTAGE	
A	95-100 %
A-	90-94 %
B+	87-89 %
B	84-86 %
B-	80-83 %
C+	77-79 %
C	74-76 %
C-	70-73 %
D+	67-69 %
D	64-66 %
D-	60-63 %
F	0-59 %

- B. Late Work. Late work may be accepted for credit but will not be graded, except in cases of emergency or by special arrangement with the professor.
- C. Grade Values. Grades in the class follow the assessments published in the seminary ATS Catalog, p. 28, e.g.,
 A = Exceptional work: surpassing, markedly outstanding achievement of course objectives;
 B = Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives;
 C = Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives”
 D = Marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives;
 F = Unacceptable work; failure to achieve course objectives.

VII. COURSE CALENDAR

Course Schedule Overview. The following chart will give you an overview of the flow of the course with important due dates and assignment flow. The “Weekly Assignment” folder will give any special week by week guidance necessary.

IOT = John Drane, *Introducing the Old Testament*. Read the text following the order posted in the schedule below.

The “Tapestries” are in-class presentations on the OT’s historical-cultural context. Students are encouraged to review them. They will be posted in the class icon and should be taken into account in preparing for the Historical Context exam. They may also be helpful for the essays, though primary attention for the essays should be on Drane’s IOT.

WEEK	DATE T, Th	ASSIGNMENTS
1	9/05, 07	<i>BSTW Interaction</i> (128) IOT, 13. From Hebrew Bible to OT, 338-362 (25) [153]
2	9/12, 14	IOT, 1. Introducing the OT, 11-35 (25) IOT, 9. The Living God, 228-251 (24) IOT, 10. God and the World, 253-276, (24) [73] [Tapestry 1. Long Ago.]
3	9/19, 21	IOT, 2. The Founding of the Nation, 36-61 (26) IOT, 3. A Land Flowing with Milk and Honey, 62-86 (25) IOT, 11. Living as God’s People, 277-305 (28) [79] [Tapestry 2. Prince of Egypt?] Essay #1
4	9/26	

	28	<i>IBS#1. Exodus Survey</i>
5	10/03, 05	IOT, 4. A King Like Other Nations, 87-119 (33) IOT, 5. The Two Kingdoms, 120-146 (27) IOT, 12. Worshipping God, 12. 306-330 (25) [85]
6	10/10	[Tapestry 3. Godfather?]
	12	<i>IBS #2. Exodus Interpretation</i>
7	10/17 19	[Tapestry 4. Blues Brothers] <i>IBS#3. Amos Survey</i>
8	10/23, 26	IOT, 6. Judah and Jerusalem, 147-172 (26) IOT, 7. Dashed Hopes and New Horizons, 173-306 (34) IOT, 8. The Challenge of a New Age, 207-227 (21) [81] [Tapestry 5. A New Hope! Judean State]
9	10/31	[Tapestry 6. Empire Strikes Back]
	11/02	Exam: Historical-Cultural Context
10	11/06 09	<i>IBS #4. Amos Interpretation-Appropriation</i>
11	11/14 16	<i>IBS#5. Psalm 89. Survey and Interpretation-Appropriation</i>
11/20 – 24 FALL READING BREAK		
12	11/28	[Tapestry 7. Return of the Judean]
	30	Essay #2
	12/05	<i>IBS#6. Malachi Survey</i>
	07	
14	12/15	<i>IBS #7. Malachi Interpretation-Appropriation</i>
		All make-up work due Friday, Dec 15, 5:00 p.m.

I look forward to working with you on the interesting and important goals of this class