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NT 510 The Gospel of Matthew

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Welcome to your initial course in Inductive Bible Study at Asbury Theological Seminary. I sat in this exact class in Fall 1991. As I reflect upon my own life and ministry, I can say that this class was perhaps the most important one that I took at Asbury. I found the IBS method to be transformative and invigorating. It opened up the Scriptures for me in new and exciting ways. It is my prayer that you will use this class as an opportunity to grow in your interpretive skills.

I. General Description

A basic course in inductive Bible studies. The primary purpose is to enable the student to begin developing an inductive approach to Bible study, especially in the areas of observation and interpretation. Parts of the Gospel of Matthew are used to demonstrate and to practice a methodical approach which can be used in other biblical books. Some of the main themes of the Gospel are highlighted in the process. NT500 (or 501) must be completed or taken concurrently with NT(IBS)510. (May be taken by students in M.A. programs not requiring Greek by special arrangement with the professor.)

This course seeks to introduce the student to the "inductive method" of biblical study, and to direct this interpretive approach to the Gospel of Matthew.

This orientation implies several things, including (1) an emphasis upon methodology and methodological concerns, and (2) a strong commitment to direct, independent study of the biblical text, with secondary sources (e.g., commentaries, grammars, dictionaries of the Bible) to be consulted by the student only after extensive, firsthand study has been completed. The English Bible (RSV/NRSV) as well as the Greek New Testament (either UBS/Nestle or Interlinear) will serve as the basis for study, and students are encouraged to make use of the original whenever practicable.

THIS COURSE WILL REQUIRE A WEEKLY TIME COMMITMENT OF 7.5-9.0 HOURS OF OUT-OF-CLASS WORK. PLAN YOUR SCHEDULES ACCORDINGLY.

Part of this course involves learning to work within time constraints. You could easily spend hundreds of hours on any of the assignments for this class, but in reality, for many of you, the time limits in this class will approximate the time available during "normal" weeks for sermon and teaching preparation.

Work diligently this semester to master the totality of this method and its application in the time available and you will have a rich resource to draw on for the rest of your ministry. Those whom you teach will be blessed!!!

* Significant portions of this syllabus reflect the influences of my IBS teachers at ATS (Profs. David Thompson and David Bauer) as well as their mentor in the method Robert A. Traina who taught IBS (then English Bible) at ATS from 1966-88. I am grateful and thankful for the role that the IBS department has played in my development as a person, teacher, and interpreter of Scripture.
II. Course Objectives

A. Methodology. The emphasis will be upon the observation and interpretation of chapters/segments and individual paragraphs and verses. By the end of the course, the student should be able to do the following:

1. As regards observation:

   a. Survey books as wholes, including
      (1) Identifying the general materials of the book (biographical, ideological, historical, etc.) and the specific materials, giving a brief title to each chapter whereby the contents of the chapter may be recalled by association;
      (2) Locating the major units and sub-units in the book and identifying the main structural relationships operative between these units (MBS, pp. 49-55);
      (3) Asking a few interpretive questions based upon each major structural law observed;
      (4) Identifying the key verses and strategic areas which provide insight into the book as a whole;
      (5) Locating data bearing on such higher critical questions as the author, place and date of writing, occasion for writing, recipients, etc.;
      (6) Noting other major impressions relating to the book as a whole.

   b. Survey of individual chapters/segments, including
      (1) Giving a brief title to each paragraph (units) within the segment whereby its contents may be recalled by association;
      (2) Locating the major groupings of paragraphs (units) within the segment and the main structural relationships operative between these units;
      (3) Asking a few interpretive questions relating to each major structural relationship observed;
      (4) Identifying the key verses or strategic areas which provide insight into the segment as a whole;
      (5) Identifying the literary form(s) employed in the segment (MBS, pp. 68-71). [Some attention will also be given to the survey of divisions and sections.]

   c. Observe the details of individual paragraphs and verses, including
      (1) Noting, on the basis of Greek NT as well as the vernacular, the important and/or difficult terms, sentence structure, and the relations between sentences and groups of sentences (MBS, pp. 39-49);
      (2) Asking detailed interpretive questions based on these observations.

2. As regards interpretation:

   a. Answer the most significant questions raised in the observation of paragraphs and verses, including:
(1) Identifying the most significant questions asked, based upon importance, difficulty, and interests;
(2) Noting the types of evidence available for answering each interpretive question (MBS, pp. 105-66), and employing this evidence to answer each question selected.

b. Integrate the answers to the questions in a progressive fashion so as to synthesize first the paragraph, then the chapter/segment, and ultimately the book as a whole. This synthesis involves, inter alia, the answering of the questions raised during the surveys of segments and of books.

3. As regards evaluation and application: Find the truths or principles which are transcultural, and relate them to appropriate contemporary situations.

4. As regards correlation: Relate the theology of the book to the teaching of other biblical materials by the same author, to the New Testament as a whole (or, with Old Testament books, to the Old Testament as a whole), and finally to the Bible as a whole, thus moving toward a biblical theology.

B. Content. The student should be able to do the following:

1. Think through the contents of the entire Gospel without reference to the printed text;
2. Identify significant passages in the Gospel and interpret them contextually;
3. Demonstrate the importance of a sound methodology for interpretation, including specific examples from the Gospel;
4. Describe thoroughly the meaning and development of major themes in the Gospel, citing individual passages and other specific data to support conclusions;
5. Discuss the historical and religious background of the First Gospel, demonstrating a general knowledge of critical problems regarding Matthew and an ability to use this historical and theological setting in the interpretation of the book.

C. Attitude. The student should:

1. Appreciate the value of sound methodology for the interpretation of the biblical materials, resulting in a desire to apply the inductive method to other biblical books;
2. Desire to make the Gospel of Matthew the object of intensive and creative study throughout life;
3. Intend to employ seriously the Gospel of Matthew in preaching and teaching within the context of the church.

III. Course Texts

A. Revised Standard Version of the Bible or New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
B. Greek New Testament (UBS/Nestle; or Interlinear) or BibleWorks 4.0 or higher
C. Methodical Bible Study, Robert Traina
D. Matthew, Proclamation Commentaries, Jack Dean Kingsbury
E. Biblical Resources for Ministry, David R. Bauer
F. Bible Study that Works, David Thompson

IV. Course Requirements
A. The completion of assigned lessons in writing, unless otherwise indicated by the instructor. All lessons are to be handed in at the end of the class period on the day designated. No late papers will be accepted save in cases in which permission is granted by the instructor based on emergency. **If you are planning on typing your lessons, I encourage you to submit your work electronically via FirstClass. You will then receive typed feedback from me, and you will receive your paper as soon as I am finished grading it rather than having to wait for class.**

B. Punctual attendance at all class sessions. Because of the importance of class attendance, and because of government regulations regarding student loans, a record of attendance will be taken at each class session. Absence at more than two class sessions will result in final grade penalty. Exceptions may be granted based on emergency, in consultation with the instructor. Please note that work-related absences are not emergencies.

C. A careful reading of the assigned portions of Kingsbury's "commentary" on Matthew. (pp.1-32, 96-107).

V. Course Evaluation
All written work will be evaluated. You will be given specific feedback for improving your performance. About 1/3rd of the assignments will be assigned a letter grade based on a scoring rubric that I will provide you in advance. Thus, all work “counts”, but only part of the work is graded in a summative fashion.

The essential core of this class is your direct, individual study of assigned portions of the Psalter. To maximize your acquisition of the IBS methodology schedule your preparation time so that your assignments are done on-time.

Your assignments will consist *primarily* of your work, not the work of other commentators. Commentaries are to be consulted only after your own interpretive work has been completed and then clear documentation must be made of these sources. As you know, IBS is not about collecting the remarks of other sources. It is about gaining confidence through the application of a tested methodology to interpret the message of Scripture on your own. Believe me when I say that the IBS methodology will be one of the key assets that you acquire here at Asbury. It will serve you for the rest of your ministry.

Regular Assignments - 75%
Final Assignment - 25%

I take grading very seriously. It is my responsibility to evaluate your work and give you a letter grade. I hope to do this in the spirit of Ephesians 4:15-16 "But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love."

Statement of Grades (from Catalog):
Regarding the assignment of grades, let each one remember that the Seminary defines an "A" as "Exceptional work: outstanding or surpassing achievement of course objectives."

Incompletes (from Catalog)
A grade of "incomplete" will be given only in the case of an "unforeseeable emergency." This does not include church work or problems in other courses at ATS.
VI. Lessons – This schedule is tentative. This represents the initial plan, but may be changed (with plenty of notice) depending upon the ability of the class.

Lesson 1. Methodology **DUE SEPTEMBER 12**
1. Read *Bible Study that Works* and pp. 31-189 of *Methodical Bible Study*, keeping in mind the following suggestions:
   a. Acquaint yourself sufficiently with the material to use it for reference.
   b. Do not be concerned with footnotes or exercises.
2. Write a 2-4 page summary of the book with questions that occurred to you in the course of reading. Simply keep a list of lessons and puzzles – what have I learned? What questions do I have? This assignment’s goal is simply to orient you to the method as a whole.

Lesson 2. Survey of the Gospel as a Whole. **SEPT 19**
Read the entire Gospel through at one sitting several times.
1. Identify the general and specific materials of the book, giving a brief title to each chapter.
2. Locate the main units and sub-units in the book, and identify the major structural relationships operative in the book as a whole.
3. Ask a few interpretive questions regarding each major structural relationship observed.
4. Identify the key verses and strategic areas which provide insight into the book as a whole. Give reasons for each selection in terms of structural significance.
5. Note data bearing on such higher critical questions as the author, place and date of writing, recipients, etc.
6. Note other major impressions relating to the book as a whole.

Lesson 3. Survey of Divisions as Wholes (1:1-4:16), and Survey of Segments as Wholes (1:1-17) **SEPT 26**
1. Survey the division 1:1-4:16, following these steps:
   a. Locate the main units and sub-units within the division, and the major structural relationships operative.
   b. Ask a few interpretive questions based on each major structural relationship observed.
   c. Identify the key verses or strategic areas which provide insight into the division as a whole.
   d. Note other major impressions relating to the division as a whole.
2. Survey the segment 1:1-17, following these steps:
   a. Give a brief title to each paragraph whereby its contents may be recalled by association.
   b. Locate the main units and sub-units within the segment and the major structural relationships operative.
   c. Ask a few interpretive questions based on each major structural relationship observed.
   d. Identify the key verses or strategic areas which provide insight into the segment as a whole.
   e. Identify the literary form(s) employed in the segment.
   f. Note other major impressions relating to the segment as a whole.

Apply the suggestions for the survey of segments found in Lesson 3 to 1:18-2:23.
Apply the suggestions for the survey of segments to 3:1-4:16.

Apply the suggestions for the survey of divisions as wholes found in Lesson 3 to 4:17-16:20.

Lesson 7. Survey of Segments as Wholes. Segment containing 5:46-48. OCT 3 (LESSON 8 TOO) 
Identify the segment of which 5:46-48 is a part, and do a survey of this segment, following the suggestions for the survey of segments in Lesson 3.

Lesson 8. Detailed Observation. 5:46-48. OCT 3 
1. Examine 5:46-48 in terms of a detailed observation. Do independent study only. Use MBS, pp. 31-36, 40-49, 72-79 as a guide. Ask interpretive questions relating to each observation made. Keep the following suggestions in mind:
   a. At this stage, experiment with the two-column format shown in MBS as a means of recording your observations and questions.
   b. Number observations, and give verse references. You may find it useful to begin by copying the text.
   c. Avoid limiting observations to grammatical analysis.
   d. Keep interpretation at a minimum, and be able to distinguish between observation and interpretation.
   e. If you can, make use of the original language.
   f. Make note of major problems that arise as you proceed.
2. Identify the most significant questions raised.

Use the exegetical determinants outlined in MBS, pp. 135-65, to interpret 5:46-48. Interpret the passage by selecting two or three of the most important questions raised in your detailed observation of the passage and by employing the exegetical determinants to answer these questions.
1. Attempt to determine which exegetical determinants are relevant to the question being answered.
2. Begin with the most important determinants, and try to bring their evidence to bear on the interpretive question being answered.
3. Using inferential reasoning, indicate the possible conclusion or conclusions to which each piece of evidence points. These conclusions, or inferences, should point toward possible answers to the interpretive question. At the close of study, list the various pieces of evidence; if more than one is possible, indicate the data supporting each possibility. If evidence is conclusive, indicate your conclusion.
4. Make periodical summaries of your findings.
5. Identify the major problems of methodology as you proceed.
6. Keeping in mind that the last exegetical determinant to be examined is secondary sources, after independent study check at least two secondary sources. Be sure to identify each commentary or other secondary source used.

Lesson 10. Survey and Interpretation. 8:1-9:35. 
1. Survey. Apply the suggestions for the survey of segments to 8:1-9:35.
2. Interpretation.
   a. Investigate the nature of Jesus' authority in this segment by answering the following questions. Over what does Jesus exercise authority? How is this authority described? Why has Matthew presented Jesus' authority in this way? What are the implications?
   b. What is the meaning of "faith" in this segment?
   c. Examine Matthew's portrait of the disciples and discipleship in 8:1-9:35 by answering the following questions: What does it mean to be a disciple? How does one become a disciple? What are the requirements of discipleship?
d. Note the titles and names that are applied to Jesus in this segment. What is the meaning and function of each?

   a. In one short paragraph, summarize the major thrust of 8:1-9:35
   b. How does this segment relate to chs. 5-7? Why has Matthew thus related these two units?

Lesson 11. Survey and Interpretation. 9:35-11:1. OCTOBER 10
2. Interpretation.
   a. Analyze what is herein said regarding the ministry of the disciples, i.e., what are the main elements in the description of the disciples ministry in this passage, and what is the meaning of each? Does this description refer to the ministry of the disciples during Jesus' earthly existence, to the ministry of the post-Easter disciples, or both? Why?
   b. What is the relationship between the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of the disciples as set forth in 9:35-11:1? Be analytical.
   Summarize the portrait of discipleship in 9:35-11-1, and relate this portrait to the understanding of discipleship in 8:1-9:35.

   Apply the Suggestions for the Survey of Segments to 11:1-30.

   Using the two-column format, do a detailed observation of 11:28-30. Identify the most significant questions raised.

   Using the two-column format, interpret 11:28-30. Identify the most significant questions raised.


Lesson 16. Interpretation 13:1-52. OCT 17
1. Identify the structure of each parable. Interpret each parable using relevant interpretive determinants (including structure of parable itself, context, etc.). Be especially careful to show the relationship between the structure of each parable and its interpretation. As a result of your study, attempt to state the message of each parable in a sentence or two.
2. Analyze the meaning and function of vv. 10-17 and vv. 34-35 within the flow of ch. 13.

2. Interpretation.
   a. What was the nature and origin of the "tradition of the elders?" What views of religion underlie this understanding of purification? In light of 15:1-20, how is Jesus' view of religion different from that of the scribes and Pharisees?
   b. Trace Jesus' answer in vv. 3-9. What are the man elements of the answer? How does this response answer the question of the Pharisees in v. 2?
   c. Analyze the miracle story of 15:21-28. Interpret vv. 25-28. How does this story relate to the material at the beginning of ch. 15?
   Summarize Jesus' views of religious practice according to this segment.

Using the two column format, do a detailed observation of 16:18-19. Identify the most significant questions raised.

Lesson 20. Interpretation. 16:18-19. OCTOBER 31 LESSON 21 DUE AS WELL!
Interpret 16:18-19 by answering a significant question from your detailed observation.

1. Evaluation. Having interpreted Mt. 16:18-19, evaluate the passage in order to determine what relevance it has for you, for your ministry, and for the people to whom you will minister.
2. Application. Ask a series of applicatory questions on the basis of your evaluation of this passage. In light of your circumstances (and the circumstances of those under your ministry), how would you answer these questions?

Lesson 22. Survey of Divisions as Wholes (16:21-28:20), and Survey of Segments as Wholes (16:21-17:23). NOVEMBER 7
1. Apply the suggestions for the survey of divisions as wholes found in Lesson 3 to 16:21-28:20.
2. Apply the suggestions for the survey of segments to 16:21-17:27.

Lesson 23. Detailed Observation. 16:24-28. NOVEMBER 14
Using the two-column format, do a detailed observation of 16:24-28. Identify the most significant questions raised.

Lesson 24. Interpretation. 16:24. NOVEMBER 14
Interpret 16:24 by answering a significant question from your detailed observation.

Lesson 25. Survey and Interpretation. 17:24-18:35. NOVEMBER 28
1. Survey.
2. Interpretation.
   a. What is the meaning of 17:24-27? What does its inclusion here imply regarding the situation of Matthew's church? Explore the relation of 17:24-27 to ch. 18.
   b. What main issues are addressed in ch. 18, and what is the specific meaning and significance of each?
   c. Interpret the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (18:23-35) and relate it to the preceding material in this segment. Be specific, precise, and penetrating.
   a. Summarize the teaching of 17:24-18:35.
   b. How does this segment relate to its surrounding context?

1. Survey
2. Interpretation.
   a. What problem is raised in each paragraph, and how does Jesus deal with each problem?
   c. What is the meaning of the parable of the laborers (20:1-16)? What is its function in this context?
   d. What are the main emphases found in the third announcement of the cross [and resurrection] (20:17-19)? How is this announcement related to its context? Compare this third announcement with the first and second announcements of the cross and resurrection (16:21; 17:22-23)?
Contrast Jesus and the disciples in this segment. How does this contrast relate to the contrast between Jesus and the disciples in the preceding material, especially 16:21-17:27?

Evaluate and apply 19:21.

Apply the principles of survey, analysis, and synthesis to this section. Analyze your methodology and identify and problems you encounter in the course of study.

Lesson 29. Survey and Interpretation. Mt. 24-25. DECEMBER 5
1. Survey.
2. Interpretation.
   a. What is the meaning of the disciples' question in 24:4? Trace Jesus' response to the question. How does Jesus answer the question and why does he answer their question in this way?
   b. What are the major emphases of the parables in 25:1-46? What is the relationship between ch. 24 and ch. 25? Keeping in mind the flow of the story, why did Jesus speak these parables to his disciples at this point?
   a. Summarize the major emphases of chs. 24-25.
   b. Investigate the relationship between these chapters and their surrounding context.

Lesson 30. Synthesis of Method. DECEMBER 12
1. Observation.
   b. Do detailed observation of 28:18-20. Identify the most significant questions raised.
2. Interpretation. Interpret 28:18-20 by answering one or two of the most significant questions raised in your detailed observation.
4. Self-Analysis. Critically evaluate your own methodology. Identify points of strength and weakness. What major problems remain in your mind regarding methodology?

Lesson 31. Synthesis of Content.
1. What are the broad contours of Matthew's portrait of Jesus? That is, what is the christology of Matthew? Give evidence to support your conclusions (including verse references).
2. What are the main concerns of the teachings of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel? Include discussion of the kingdom of heaven, discipleship, and the law.
3. What is Matthew's understanding of salvation history? Discuss Matthew's views regarding the relationship between the time of the prophets, of John the Baptist, of Jesus, of the church, and the parousia.

VII. Select Bibliography


Major German commentaries include those by Gaechter, Gnilka, Lohmeyer, Sand, Schlatter, Weifel and Zahn. Major French commentaries include Benoit, Bonnard, Lagrange, and Sabourin.