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NT 520 Introduction to the New Testament

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Welcome!!!

Welcome to Asbury Theological Seminary, and particularly to this course, NT 520XL New Testament Introduction!

I am excited to serve as your guide in this journey. I was born and grew up in Taiwan. After I graduated from National Taiwan University with B. S. degree in Electrical Engineering, I came to U. S. to pursue formal theological education. I love the Lord and consequently love His inspired word. So for my graduate studies I majored in the New Testament. When I received my Ph. D. degree Asbury Theological Seminary (my dear alma mater) invited me to join the faculty. This is my 35th year teaching New Testament at this blessed seminary. This is a long time, and I enjoy every day of my ministry here. (I say every “day,” not every hour or every minute. Sometimes I have to do some chore, which I am not very excited about, ha!). I look forward to teaching this course. Let us encourage each other and help each other to make our joint journey successful and enjoyable. For this surely we need to rely upon the mercy and grace of the Lord. Let us pray for one another as we take this journey together.

Let me take this opportunity to make some comments about this course. If you are pursuing the degree of Master of Divinity, or Master of Arts in Biblical Studies, this is a required course for you. If you are pursuing another degree, this course may satisfy your requirements in the area of biblical studies. If you are not pursuing a degree, but are only interested in knowing more about the New Testament, this course is also for you.

This course will introduce you to the New Testament, the foundation of our Christian faith. Any thinking person would like to know how did we get the New Testament. Why there are 27 books in the New Testament? Who wrote each of these 27 books? When were they written? Under what circumstances were they written? When we look more carefully, we find there are different kinds of literature in the New Testament. Some books are called “Gospel,” some “epistle” or “letter.” What are they? What
functions do they have? This course attempts to answer these questions intelligently.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was born and ministered in a specific historical situation. The events reflected in the New Testament took place in specific culture. The more we know about the historical and cultural background of that time and place, the better we can understand the New Testament.

Some people propose some theories to discredit the trustworthiness of, and undermine the authority of the New Testament. Superficially listening to them, these theories seem rather plausible. By accepting these seemingly plausible theories, many have shipwrecked in their faith. Others are puzzled by these theories. If you are a minister or a teacher (or going to become one), some of your parishioners or students will come to ask you for help. You need to know the weaknesses of these theories so that you can help those people whom God has entrusted in your care. This course will attempt to help you in this area also.

Catalog Course Description:
An introduction to (1) the literature of the New Testament in its socio-historical, literary and canonical contexts, (2) critical* study of the New Testament. (*In this context, “criticism” or “critical” does not mean to criticize the New Testament. Criticism means to ask intelligent questions and seek intelligent answers.)

Course Objectives:
This course is designed to introduce you to the following areas of New Testament study.
1. Critical methodologies used in studying the New Testament and to evaluate them.
2. Questions of Canon and Text of the New Testament
3. Questions of “Introduction” about New Testament documents (date, authorship, genre, purpose, etc.)
4. Main messages of the books in the New Testament
5. The history of the period in which the New Testament was written

Required Text Books:
Achtemeier, Paul J.; Green, Joel B.; Thompson, Marianne M., Introducing the New Testament, Its Literature and Theology
Green, Joel B., Hearing the New Testament, Strategies for Interpretation
Marshall, I Howard, I Believe in the Historical Jesus

Recommended Resource Books:
(You don't have to buy these books. However, if you can afford it, it is good to have these books in your personal library. They are very useful.)
Bauer, David R., *An Annotated Guide to Biblical Resources for Ministry*
Ferguson, Everett, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, Third Edition
*Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (InterVarsity Press)
*Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (InterVarsity Press)

To buy books contact, by phone or email:
Asbury Bookstore, 300 N. Lexington Ave., Wilmore, KY 40390
Tel. 1-866-855-8252 (toll-free)
Tel. (859) 858-4242
Email: exlbooks@asburyseminary.edu

Course Procedure:
1. Every week I will post assignments for the week in Course Center. Please set aside 9-10 hours every week from your busy schedule for this course. Your assignments may include viewing video-taped lectures (which will be mailed to you), reading, reflecting, participating in discussion, and writing. Please complete the assignments on time.

2. Sometimes I will post topics for discussion in Discussion Center for all the members of the class to participate in discussion.

3. Whenever you have any question to ask me, or you want to communicate with me privately, please post the question or message in NT520X Office. I am the only one who can read the messages in this section. This will protect your privacy. You will also submit your assignments here. I will check this Office once or twice a day during weekdays to respond to your questions, etc. (Many weekends I will be out of town, offering workshops on New Testament, or preaching somewhere in the world.)

4. If you have something you would like to share with the entire class, you can post it in Discussion Center. I hope you will open up this Center often to participate in your classmate’s discussions.

5. I hope this course will not be only an intellectual journey, but also a spiritual journey for all of us. Whenever you have any prayer requests, or any testimony you would like to share with the class, please post them in Discussion Center. I hope and pray that by sharing our concerns and prayer requests, we can enter into one another’s life and build up a Christian community. Let us hold all members of the class before the throne of grace often, if not daily.

6. If you need to get in touch with me in a hurry, you can try to call me at home (my study). My home telephone number is (859) 858-4191.
7. If you ever have a chance to come to Wilmore, please be sure to stop by to visit. I would be more than glad to meet you face to face.

Helping Hands:
If you need any help the following persons are glad to assist you.
1. For technical support, contact
   ExL_support@asburyseminary.edu

2. For information concerning this course or other aspects of the ExL program, contact Kevin Osborn at
   ExL Director @asburyseminary.edu

3. For library assistance regarding book and/or article request
   General Questions: information_commons@asburyseminary.edu
   Toll-free 1-866-454-2733
   This is the best place to start when you have questions about library resources. Help is available Monday-Thursday from 8AM-7PM and Friday and Saturday from 8AM-5:45PM. If the people at the desk can not answer your questions, they will direct you to the person or department who can.
   Materials Requests: library_loan@asburyseminary.edu
   Or call toll-free 1-866-454-2733
   ExL Students may request books, photocopies or emailed attachments of journal articles/reference books from Asbury Seminary’s Library. Please allow 3-10 business days for all requests to be filled. Contact the library loan office for information on costs and instructions on how to make requests.
   ExL students are also encouraged to make use of local library resources. Students who live within a 50 mile radius of either the Florida or the Wilmore campus should come to campus to obtain their materials.
   Research Questions:Hannah_Kirsch@asburyseminary.edu
   Or call the toll-free number and ask to be transferred to Hannah (x2189).
   ExL students are encouraged to contact Hannah Kirsch for research assistance including help choosing a paper topic, determining the best sources to use for a paper, finding book reviews, or research questions about using the online databases or any other library materials.

Online Databases:
To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-text journal databases, go to www.asburyseminary.edu/library and enter your 10 digit student id number in the login box. Your student id is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0’s to the front to make a ten digit number (20000XXXXXX where XXXXX = your student
Course Requirements:

1. You should set aside 9-10 hours each week for this course to do assignments. The assignments may include viewing video-taped lectures, reading, doing research, participating in class discussion, or small group interaction.

2. Read the entire New Testament.

3. Read and write a book review on *I Believe in the Historical Jesus* by I. Howard Marshall. This book review should be about 5 pages (typed, double spaced). It should include a summary of the book—indicating the thesis of the book, how the author develops his argument. It should indicate the strengths and weaknesses of the book.

   **Due Date: Monday, Oct. 18, 2004.**

4. Write a concise paper not to exceed 7 pages (typed, double spaced). The paper should be developed within the following parameters:
   A. Select a clearly defined topic or area of critical New Testament studies.
   B. Research the topic or area, reading at least 200 pages. (You can double click Resource Center to find resources. If you need help, you can contact ExL Reference Librarian.)
   C. The paper should:
      a. Define the topic or area (about half a page).
      b. Identify the position of the sources (about a page).
      c. Critique the position of the sources, by indicating their presuppositions, strengths/weaknesses (about 2 pages).
      d. Present and defend your position (about 2 pages).
      e. Indicate the impact of the issue and your study on your own spiritual life and your ministry (about half a page).
      f. Provide proper footnotes or end notes.

   **D. Due Date: Friday, Nov. 19, 2004**

Grade Contract:

If you fulfill all the requirements mentioned above, the highest course grade you can achieve will be B. I would like to encourage you to do additional works to improve your course grade. If you are interested you can write an additional research paper (about 10 pages) dealing with some critical New Testament studies. Grades are based on quality. Merely submitting additional works does not guarantee grade improvement. The quality of the works really counts.

**Additional project Due Date: Friday, Dec. 3, 2004**

Course Outlines:
I. Introduction

II. History of New Testament Criticism
   David F. Strauss
   Ferdinand C. Baur
   William Wrede
   History of Religions School
   Wilhelm Bousset
   Rudolf Bultmann—Demythologizing
   New Quest of Historical Jesus

III. Canon and Text of the New Testament

IV. Gospels
   Nature of Gospel
   Synoptic Problem
   Form Criticism
   Redaction Criticism
   Tradition Criticism
   Literary Criticism
   Synoptic and Johannine Gospels
   Critical Introduction to the Individual Gospel

V. Acts

VI. Epistles
   Nature, Functions of Epistles
   Critical Introduction to the Individual Epistles

VII. Apocalyptic Literature
   Nature of Apocalyptic Literature
   Critical Introduction to the Book of Revelation
   Interpretations of the Book of Revelation

VIII New Testament History
   Life of Jesus
   History of the Early Church

Tentative Course Schedule:
Sep. 6-10 Introduction
Sep. 13-17 Strauss, Baur, Wrede
Sep. 20-24 History of Religions School
Sep. 27-Oct. 1 Bousset, Bultmann
Oct. 4-8 Bultmann, New Quest
Oct. 11-15 Canon and Text of New Testament
Oct. 18-22 Gospels
Oct. 25-29 Gospels
Nov. 1-5 Gospels, Acts,
Nov. 8-12 Epistles
Nov. 15-19 Epistles
Nov. 22-26 Reading Week (No classes)
Nov. 29-Dec. 3 Epistles, Apocalyptic
Dec. 6-10 New Testament History
Dec. 13-17 New Testament History