



The Background to Romans

Syllabus

INSTRUCTOR

Dr Bruce Lowe received his first doctorate in Analytical Chemistry, and lectured consulted and researched in both Chemistry and Chemical Engineering. He then completed his MDiv at RTS Orlando, becoming an ordained Presbyterian minister, and working primarily in church planting and the revitalization of struggling works. He is in the final stages of a doctorate in New Testament Studies, where his thesis has focused on the cultural backdrop to Romans. He has presented at both the international and annual meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature in the Pauline Epistles Section, and published in the Journal of Theological Studies. Dr Lowe has a passion for applying the New Testament to today's culture.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Popular Roman culture in Paul's day was something the apostle was aware of, and something he both *used* and *critiqued* as he wrote to various churches. The form of his letters, for example, was *informed* by cultural standards of the day. The strategies of argumentation he employed were also well understood by his readers. Even the way 'friendship' was approached becomes important as Paul writes to the Roman Christians whom he was yet to visit. On the negative side, Paul is critical of many standards of his day, especially the pre-eminence of 'knowledge' –an issue highly relevant for today's world too. This course will seek to capitalize on the cultural backdrop to Romans, to better understand the letter. But then by noting overlap with our own culture, application for today will also be unearthed.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To get a sense of first century Roman culture.
2. To understand Romans better through this cultural backdrop.
3. To better understand ways the New Testament may impact our understanding of our own culture.

READING

Course Reader

This reader will contain a number of interesting articles from the first century, as well as important chapters from recent books –all designed to help you get a better picture of the background behind Romans. The reader will be free for those enrolled in the course.

ASSESSMENT

There will be an exam, which must be completed within 3 weeks of the course finishing. It will be a 2 hour exam dealing with the material in the lectures and with material from the reader.

WHEN IS THE COURSE BEING RUN?

Friday 4th May: 2.30 for **3pm** start to **8.30pm** (supper provided in course fee)
Saturday 5th May: **9am to 3pm** (lunch **not** provided)

General Outline

BACKGROUND

**‘Letters from the First Century’.

***Auschwitz & the Da Vinci Code*: A history of background studies, their value and dangers.

***Helping a Hungarian Build a Fence*: The nature of ‘friendship’ and how this helps us understand Romans.

**How to Argue Your case 1st Century Style

SPECIFICS

***A Velvet glove on Predestination: Nuances to Romans 9 in light of Argument Approaches*

*** Paul meets Dr Phil: Romans 8 and the critique of contemporary culture.*

***Who is the Romans 7 person?*

***Understanding Romans 1-5*

***When Christians should Boast!*

***Did the Roman Like the Jews?*

APPLICATION

***Tips for Teaching/Preach Romans against its cultural background*

***Winning Olympic Gold! Honor & Shame in the first Century and today (CD handout on Saturday)*

***Summary & Study Tips (CD handout on Saturday)*