

'Gospels' (4NT508) – 3 hours

Fall 2008

Syllabus

INSTRUCTOR

Dr Bruce Lowe received his first doctorate in Analytical Chemistry and taught, consulted and researched in a university setting over several years in both Chemistry and Chemical Engineering departments. He then completed his MDiv at RTS Orlando, becoming an ordained Presbyterian minister and working in university ministry, as a youth pastor and in church revitalization. He is in the final stages of a doctorate in New Testament Studies, where his thesis has focused on the cultural backdrop to Romans. Bruce has a special interest in hermeneutics (the process of interpretation), and is keen to not simply teach the *contents* of the gospels, but to teach *approaches* which will equip students for a lifetime of fruitful learning & growth.

< Office hrs: **M**, 3:30-5:30; **Th**, 11.00-12:30. Email me for an appointment; blowe@rts.edu >

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Knowing the real Jesus has been the quest of many people over the centuries, and though often poorly conceived, it is rightly the quest of every Christian today. This course will examine the four accounts of Jesus' life, in order to gain a four dimensional picture of our Lord. More than this though, by developing sensitivity to how each account was crafted, we will gain a better sense of how to apply each gospel today. Students will thus be helped in both their knowledge of the gospels, and in tools for understanding them better.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. That students will come to a clearer personal understanding of Jesus.
2. That students will understand the unique contributions of Mark, Matthew, Luke & John.
3. That students will be in a position to teach from any of the four gospels with confidence.

READING

Craig Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels* (IVP, 1997) ISBN 0851117708

Kurt Aland (ed.), *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* (American Bible Soc., 1982) ISBN 0826705006

David Rhoads *et al*, *Mark as Story* (2nd ed., Fortress, 1999) ISBN 0800631609

Robert Strimple, *The Modern Search for the Real Jesus* (P&R, 1995) ISBN 0875524559

ASSESSMENT

- 4 x 5%** “Big Ideas” (on selected passages from each gospels); **due dates**, see **below**¹
- 2 x 10%** Two-page Critical Book Reviews of Rhoads & Strimple; **due dates**, see **below**²
- 30%** Written Assignment (2000 words - **due on December 11th in class**).³
- 30%** Final Exam – to be completed and emailed to me (blowe@rts.edu) before **January 1st (2009), midnight**.

WHEN IS THE COURSE BEING RUN?

Thursday **4th September** to Thursday **11th December** (excluding **23rd October & 27th November** [Thanksgiving]); **1pm to 4pm**.

¹ This involves producing a sentence which summarizes the purpose of the selected passage, which must be emailed to me prior to the upcoming class. You must then be able to defend your reason for this ‘Big Idea’ within class discussion.

² A good critical book review should include 4 sections: 1) A summary of what the book covers (no more than half a page, often less); 2) Things you agree with and why; 3) Things you disagreed with and why; 4) A brief overall comment on the value of this book.

³ I will be suggesting some topics, but I am also open (and glad!) to approving a topic of your choice. Because of it being almost a third of the course assessment, I will be expecting this to be a genuine research assignment interacting with the opinions of others in both commentaries and journal articles. A good critical essay should 1) have a clear structure, reflecting the question being addressed (SUCH AS...); 2) begin with a general overview of the subject and others opinions (INTRODUCTION/GENERAL STEP); 3) focus more closely on a text or opinion for critical review (REFINING STEP); 4) draw a conclusion as to how the question has been answered in light of this essay (CONCLUSION).

General Outline

Week	Date	Assessment/HW Due	Class Lectures
1 A 1 B 1 C	S4		Window/Mirror/Picture/Dialogue Interpreting a Painting (Part 1) Interpreting a Painting (Part 2)
2 A 2 B 2 C	S11		“The Demoniac(s)” Exercise Considering the Critical Approach (Part 1) Considering the Critical Approach (Part 2)
3 A 3 B 3 C	S18	10% Review of <i>Rhoads</i> HW Read Mark 1-6 (3x)	Considering the Critical Approach (Part 3) Mark (Part 1: <i>Purpose & Chs 1 & 16</i>) Mark (Part 2: <i>1.21-34</i>)
4 A 4 B 4 C	S25	HW Read Zech 14 (3x)	Mark (Part 3: <i>Ch4</i>) Mark (Part 4: <i>Ch8</i>) Mark (Part 5: <i>11.20-25</i>)
5 A 5 B 5 C	O2	5% “Big idea”	Mark (Part 6: <i>13.32-37&14.32-42</i>) Mark (Part 7: <i>Chs 14-16</i>) Matthew (Part 1)
6 A 6 B 6 C	O9		Matthew (Part 2) Matthew (Part 3) Matthew (Part 4)
7 A 7 B 7 C	O16	5% ‘Big Idea’	Matthew (Part 5) Matthew (Part 6) Matthew (Part 7)
Break			
8 A 8 B 8 C	O30		John (Part 1) John (Part 2) John (Part 3)
9 A 9 B 9 C	N6	10% Review of <i>Strimple</i>	John (Part 4) John (Part 5) John (Part 6)
10A 10B 10C	N13	5% ‘Big Idea’	John (Part 7) Luke (Part 1) Luke (Part 2)
11A 11B 11C	N20		Luke (Part 3) Luke (Part 4) Luke (Part 5)
Thanksgiving – no class			
12A 12B 12C	D4	5% ‘Big Idea’	Luke (Part 6) Luke (Part 7) Beyond the Gospels (Part 1)
13A 13B 13C	D11	30% Assignment	Beyond the Gospels (Part 2) Beyond the Gospels (Part 3) Course Summary

