

2NT522 HEBREWS THROUGH REVELATION
Reformed Theological Seminary Fall 2008
Instructor C. E. Hill

Class: Wednesday s 8:00-12:00

Office Hours: TBA

I. COURSE OBJECTIVES

Cognitive/Knowing

- * To understand the historical, literary, cultural, and biblical contexts for these books, and their impact upon exegesis.
- * To understand the major themes of each of these books and the distinctive contributions of each book to the canon.
- * To understand the divine authorization as well as the redemptive-historical origin and development of the New Testament canon, and its reception in the Church.
- * To become acquainted with the secondary literature on these books and on the NT canon.

Affective/Being

- * To be warmly devoted to the Scriptures as God's word for life and ministry.
- * To be a prayerful, godly, and faithful exegete and expositor of these particular books.

Active/Doing

- * To be able to give in order the major themes of each chapter of each of these books.
- * To be able to articulate an informed position on the authorship of these books.
- * To be able to offer an appropriate defense of the legitimacy of our 27-book New Testament canon of Scripture.
- * To be able to explain those aspects of the background and life situation of each book which are relevant for its interpretation and application.
- * To be able to summarize and evaluate the approaches taken to these books by contemporary, critical and orthodox scholarship.
- * To be able to summarize and evaluate the main hermeneutical approaches to the book of Revelation and particularly to ch. 20.
- * To be able to worship God, teach, preach, counsel, exhort, theologize from these books of the NT with greater confidence!

To this end, the lectures and readings are designed to help impart a thorough, rudimentary understanding of the historical and redemptive-historical settings, structures, major themes, theology, canonical significance and practical importance of Hebrews, the Catholic Epistles, and Revelation.

II. REQUIRED TEXTS

- Bauckham, R. J., *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge, 1993) ISBN 0521356911
Carson, D. A, and D. J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, second edition (Grand Rapids; Zondervan, 2005) ISBN 0310238595
Martin, R. P. and P. H. Davids, eds., *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997) ISBN 0830817794
Ridderbos, H., *Redemptive History and the New Testament Scriptures*, tr. H. De Jongste, revised by R. B. Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg; P&R, 1988) ISBN 0875524168

OPTIONAL TEXT

- Hill, C. E., *Regnum Caelorum. Patterns of Millennial Thought in Early Christianity*, second edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001) – PURCHASED FROM THE INSTRUCTOR \$10.00

III. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

A. PHILOSOPHY OF GRADING

If you decide you want to challenge me on a grade you receive, you have that right. I strongly urge you, however, to refrain from doing so. Except in cases of accidental mis-marking (not unknown), I very rarely change a grade once given. Despite what you might think, I agonize over your grades. I hate assigning bad grades probably more than you hate getting them. I live in fear that some grade I give is going to drive someone over the edge into a life of crime, or to seek retribution. After years of struggling with this issue I've come to a few conclusions, which I hope you will take to heart:

1. Grades don't kill people. People kill people. Therefore, do not take them too seriously (grades, that is).
2. High grades, if you do not achieve them, really don't matter much. It is true! Nobody in the presbytery (etc.) is going to care whether you got an A- or a C+ in this class, and no church - at least no church which you would want to pastor - will refuse to hire you on the basis of your mediocre grades. (In fact, the discrimination may be worse the other way around. Many people feel threatened by a pastor who is "too smart" or knows too much theology. They want dumb pastors, whom they can push around intellectually.)

Grades are a concession to academia. RTS is an academic institution, but an academic institution which exists to serve the Church of Jesus Christ. The only people for whom good grades might make any tangible difference, therefore, are those who have ambitions of getting into a Ph. D. program. For these people, it is well to keep James's words in mind, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren' (3.1).

3. Going to the other extreme of inflating grades does nobody any good. You have probably been conditioned to believe that your self-esteem will rise along with your inflated grade. But think again. If word gets out that RTS gives easy grades, the seminary's reputation suffers. And if RTS's reputation suffers, your reputation suffers. And there goes your self-esteem again, so you are right back where you started from!
4. When high grades really mean something, imagine your ecstasy (and your self-esteem; but watch out for pride!) when you do achieve them! This euphoria (or the dream of it) will be denied you if we do not reserve high grades for only the best performances.

Therefore, an "A" in this class is to be considered a mark of distinction. A's will not be given routinely. An "A-" is still quite commendable. A "B" is a very fine grade. A "C" is nothing to be ashamed of. A "C" means you did what was required of you, and in seminary, what is required of you is a lot. Remember, merely graduating from this seminary is an everlasting sign to others that your accomplishments are many and worthy of praise. An "A", then, is reserved only for outstanding work. That is my philosophy of grading, and it is quite within the bounds of the seminary's overall philosophy.

B. GRADING COMPONENTS

As already mentioned, there will be four tools for evaluation employed in this class:

Study Questions (20%)
Final Exam (40%)

Reading percentage (10%)
Paper (30%)

1. Study Questions. You will be divided into groups of about 7, to do Study Questions on the readings. The readings have been chosen not only to bring you into contact with current research on background issues and matters of interpretation, but also to acquaint you with some of the prominent thinking concerning these books throughout the course of church history (particularly by some of my personal heroes!). The Study Questions are designed as aids in your reading and study of this material.

Usually an average of about a half a page to one full page per question will be adequate. You may write on more than is asked for in the questions, as a learning tool for yourselves, but you must at least answer the questions. Every member of the group must read the assignments and every member must attend the meetings and contribute. I suggest you meet every week to discuss the readings as we do them. Each group should have a chair person and probably a secretary who writes the answers. I also suggest each of you take notes on the readings, then discuss the questions together.

At the end of the semester all your study questions will be handed in at the same time. Each set must contain:

- Answers to the questions.
- A statement of attendance and participation by all members, signed by the chair.
- Signatures of each member of the group.

These will not be graded rigorously. The purpose is to ensure that you are reading thoughtfully, to get you to interact seriously with authors, and for your own exegetical/spiritual/theological development – and to allow you the mutual benefit of your peers in understanding the material.

2. Final Exam. (Note that there is no Midterm Exam. This concession will, of course, be much appreciated by the student.)

The final will be objective. There will be short-answer Bible content questions, asking you to tell me what is contained in a given chapter of Hebrews through Revelation. There will also be questions, either multiple choice or short answer, based on the lectures. These will not be based explicitly on the readings, unless something from the readings is discussed in class or is repeated in the lectures.

Bible Content Questions. The answers do not have to be detailed, three or four words is sufficient: “The Mechizedekian Priesthood of Christ”; Christ Superior to Angels; “The New Heavens and New Earth”; “The Two Beasts”. This will not be graded with rigor. Basically, your titles may not even be the legitimate themes of the chapters, as long as the topic is covered in that chapter. (But please do avoid such non-descript and probably bogus titles as “Practical Advice” or “Christian Living”; a better title would be “Obey Your Leaders” or “Fervent Prayer”.) The purpose of this assignment is to aid you in finding pegs on which to hang your knowledge of the contents of these books. We live in a largely biblically illiterate age and this has affected us all. It is all the more incumbent upon us, therefore, to know our Bibles.

Let me suggest a method for studying for these questions. As you read through the biblical books, simply note down what appears to you to be the major theme of the chapters. There are only 56 chapters involved, and many of you already have an idea of what is in, say, Hebrews 11; James 2; 1 John 1; Rev. 20. Moreover, three of the books are but one chapter long. Being able to “walk someone through” a biblical book is very useful for counseling, for those who may have to sit Presbytery exams, and for all Christians who want to know their Bibles. And even if you forget a few of the chapters after this class, you’ll have a handy list of them that you made yourself!

3. Statement on Reading. On your final you will also be asked to state the percentage of the assigned readings you personally completed. You will, in effect, give yourself a grade on this. If you read 90% of the reading assigned, you get 90% on this grade. Will you be honest? If not, your conscience will dog you throughout your ministry!

4. Position Paper. This is to be a 1,800 (for students who have had Greek) to 2,400 (for those who have not) word exegetical position paper on one of the following topics.

**What are the personal and pastoral implications of Hebrews 6. 4-6, based on sound exegesis?*

**How should the Church understand the millennium of Revelation 20.1-10?*

This paper is due at 5:00 p.m. on the paper deadline day – no exceptions, no excuses. You must mark on the paper the time of day when you handed it in. There will be a late penalty of 5% per hour (or any part of an hour) after 5:00 p.m. This assignment is not a full-blown exegetical paper, but if you need one for Presbytery, this could be expanded for that purpose.

*If you have had Greek, you will have a translation assignment, either Hebrews (6.1-8) or Revelation (20.1-6), to go with the paper you choose to write. You must provide the Greek text along with your translation. You should explain *with the use of footnotes* in the text and/or in the translation, your decisions on important matters of translation.*

IV. PAPER TIPS

A. REQUIREMENTS

1. No more than 1,800 (for students who have had Greek) to 2,400 (for those who have not) words. (Bibliographies are not counted in the word count, but footnotes ARE.) *You must print the number of words at the end of your document!* Papers which are longer than this **may** be graded down.
2. You must include a proper bibliography of works cited.
3. You must not plagiarize (see under E below).

B. EVALUATION

I will evaluate your papers by content (Biblical faithfulness; exegetical skill; level of thought and research; accuracy of statement; clarity of expression); by presentation (organization; logical coherence; readability of the typescript, etc) and, to a lesser extent, by style (correct grammar, spelling, syntax, etc).

Originality. For the particular assignment of a position paper, originality is not an absolutely necessary virtue. Wisdom, in the exposition of controversial passages, may be best manifested in the ability to sift judiciously through the diverse explanations of other scholars and the ability to

state coherent reasons for the superiority of one interpretation over another. I am interested, however, not merely in your evaluation of other views but **primarily** in your ability to interact with the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking through James, Peter, John, Jude, and the author of Hebrews in the text itself. This means ... exegesis.

Beware of being overly derogatory, condescending towards, or misrepresenting the views of others. Strive for accuracy, balance, charity (where possible) and "speaking the truth in love". There is no (automatic!) penalty for disagreeing with your instructor on something you know he believes. It will only be asked whether your critique is fair and your alternative is plausible. If it is not orthodox you also run certain risks.

C. PREPARATION AND FORMAT

There are certain elements which I would like to see in each paper:

1. Each paper should lay out the theological/pastoral issues which may be at stake in the interpretation of the text in question.
2. In a paper this brief you do not need to rehearse background issues, such as authorship, date, and setting, except insofar as they may directly affect your exegesis. Also, if writing on Rev. 20, you do not need to engage in any lengthy, preliminary summary of the 3 major positions but may assume that the reader knows these already.
3. The bulk of the paper should be a summary of your own study of the question, stating the most important exegetical factors in coming to your position. [As a suggestive list: are there grammatical or syntactical factors, lexicographical factors, context factors, factors resulting from a comparison with other Scriptural passages, etc., which are important for a proper understanding of your text?]
4. The paper should finish with a conclusion.
5. If you have had Greek, you must also hand in *with* your paper your own translation of either Hebrews 6. 1-8 or Revelation 20. 1-6.

In your study, you are expected to utilize all the exegetical tools to which you were exposed in Greek Exegesis. If you have not had Greek Exegesis, do the best job you can of acting as if you have. Utilize as many of the sources such as Kittel, the lexicons, etc., and scholarly articles, as you can.

All papers are to be fully documented *with appropriate bibliography* and footnotes (not endnotes). Pages *must* be numbered, AND there *must* be a word count total at the end of the paper. Whether or not you have had Greek Exegesis, the Exegetical Process Notebooks used for that class may be used as exegetical guides for the position paper. (I am not of course requiring you to work through them for this project).

D. TECHNICAL POINTS

Please ensure that the print is clear and dark. My eyes are not getting any younger and I will consider myself at liberty to dock your grade if your paper is too light for comfortable reading. *Please put page numbers on each page except the first.* When you cite other sources you **must** document them fully (in a Bibliography, or with footnotes) and you must do it in an acceptable way. *That is, if you are giving an author's exact words put them in quotation marks and tell me the page from which the quotation was taken. If you are summarizing an author's view (not giving the exact words) you still need to tell me where you have obtained your information.* This is very important. If I find you have used another author's material without acknowledgement I will be tempted to think you want to fail this course. And I may give you what I think you want.

Here is a short list of common errors I often see on student papers. Please avoid them:

| <u>Incorrect</u> | <u>Correct</u> |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| truely | truly |
| annointed | anointed |
| emporer | emperor |
| the upmost importance | the utmost importance |
| would of, could of, etc. | would have, could have, etc |
| in return | in turn |
| x sites Scripture; x sights Scripture | x cites Scripture |
| then he lead them astray | then he led them astray |
| false prophesy | false prophecy (noun) |
| I prophecy | I prophesy (verb) |
| he meets out judgment | he metes out judgment |
| this hearkens back to Isaiah | this harks back to Isaiah |
| you ought to hark to my word | you ought to hearken to my word |
| cannon of Scripture | canon of Scripture |
| the whole council of God | the whole counsel of God |
| a person should think for themselves | a person should think for herself |
| a person should think for themself | a person should think for himself |
| | a person should think for him/herself |
| | people should think for themselves |

In addition, please refrain from using split infinitives (if you do not know what a split infinitive is, find out). I am not a stickler for not ending a sentence with a preposition; in some cases it is necessary or preferable to do so. Do, however, make sure you use only one preposition where one is needed, for example:

| <u>Incorrect</u> | <u>Correct</u> |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| ... with whom you can have a personal relationship with. | ... with whom you can have a personal relationship. |
| ... on which your ideas are based on. | ... on which your ideas are based. |

These things are elementary to you, I am sure. But it doesn't hurt to be reminded ...

E. A WARNING

It should go without saying - but it won't - that any form of plagiarism will be subject to adverse sanctions. See your handbook.

THIS IS NOT A COLLABORATIVE ASSIGNMENT! EACH STUDENT IS TO DO HIS OR HER OWN WORK INDIVIDUALLY. Let me spell this out a little more clearly.

Studying together, bouncing ideas off each other, having someone read your paper and offer suggestions before you turn it in, may all be beneficial. But I do not expect, simply from "studying together", that the same phrases, sentences, paragraphs or outlines will turn up in two or more papers. If you choose to test your ideas on someone, get feedback, have someone critique your paper before handing it in, etc., please make sure that this person is not working on the same passage you are. If you know that someone else is working on the same passage, my advice is that you avoid that person until the semester is finished. If it happens to be your

roommate, move out and find another place to live. If it happens to be your spouse, you might try Paul's advice of devoting yourselves to prayer for a season, making sure to come together again when the semester is over, lest Satan tempt you.

In any kind of research, we lean on and get help from a number of sources. To the extent that these sources are identifiable - and particularly if they are in print - they must be acknowledged. If you are using the exact words of another source, these words should be in quotation marks and the source footnoted. If you are not using the exact words but have taken over an idea, or are summarizing someone else's work, do not use quotation marks, but still note the source.

It is much better to attribute material even to a relatively unknown expert ("According to my roommate, Billy Joe DuPree, in his high school term paper for Mrs. Anderson, December 2000, page 2 ...") than to use the work of another and pass it off as your own. It will be more tolerable for you on the day of judgment (i.e., when I hand out the grades) if you have given me old grocery lists which you yourself have authored than if you hand in the work of someone else without attribution. If you want to hand in someone else's work, at least put quotation marks around the whole text and tell me from whom you copied it. It is bad to be lazy; it is worse to be dishonest.