

## **LIGONIER ACADEMY**

Modular Course (30 hours): DMin: The Epistle to the Hebrews with Special Reference to its Use of the Old Testament

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## **SYLLABUS**

### **Course Description:**

Primarily focusing on the Epistle to the Hebrews, this course encourages the student to gain general mastery of the Epistle's content, developing argument, and theological synthesis. Sufficient attention is paid to secondary literature, especially recent secondary literature, to foster interaction with some current discussion. At the same time, primary attention is paid to the use of the Old Testament in Hebrews, in an attempt both to grasp *Auctor's* hermeneutic, and to wrestle with still larger questions regarding the nature of biblical theology—invariably with pastoral implications kept in view.

### **Content Overview:**

Questions of “introduction” will largely be covered by pre-course reading, and will receive little attention during class time. Most of class time will work through the text of the Epistle to the Hebrews, paragraph by paragraph, chapter by chapter. But from time to time, excursions will be introduced regarding the structure, rhetoric, and theology of the material covered thus far. And in particular, there will be lengthy excursions to examine closely a selection of passages in Hebrews where the Old Testament is quoted or alluded to, with careful attention being paid to the context of the Old Testament passage in question, and the use to which *Auctor* puts it.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

- (1) Fairly detailed knowledge of the actual text of Hebrews—the argument of each chapter, including knowledge of the OT source of each OT quotation (at least book and chapter).
- (2) An introductory grasp of the current discussion on Hebrews—who the major “players” are, their general stance toward the book, and contributions they have made.
- (3) Improved understanding of the hermeneutic displayed by *Auctor* in his handling of the Old Testament—and of the bearing of such a hermeneutic on our own attempts at constructing biblical and canonical theology.
- (4) Improved grasp of how to handle the Bible (with Hebrews as the focal point), not

only in formal teaching, but in a wide variety of pastoral contexts.

(5) Ability to think through how to preach Hebrews, in whole or in part.

### **Assessment Tasks and Due Dates:**

(1) Pre-course assignment: Read the introductions to all four of the commentaries marked with an asterisk in the bibliography, and a sampling of comments (from all four commentaries) on select passages from Hebrews (your choice of passages). Write a 2500-word evaluation of the stances, strengths, and weaknesses of each of the four commentaries (One paper dealing with all four commentaries). This is to be handed in at the first lecture. **30% of grade.**

(2) Course quizzes: During the course itself, you will be expected to brush up on the content of Hebrews, including the book and chapter from which OT quotations are drawn. The last day will include a quiz of sixty questions, all short answer (a word or a phrase) covering the material in all thirteen chapters. Know the text! **20% of grade.**

(3) Post-course assignment: Write an essay of not more than 5000 words on one significant passage of Hebrews, to be chosen by the student and approved by the instructor. This essay must (a) explain the meaning and the flow of thought of the chosen text, with exegetical rigor; (b) interact with at least some of the major commentaries and of the relevant articles and books that bear on the interpretation of the passage; (c) explain how this passage fits into the developing argument of Hebrews—not only its connections with the whole, but its unique contributions to the book; (d) where appropriate, i.e. where there is a quotation from the OT within the chosen passage, unpack *Auctor*'s hermeneutic in citing that passage; (e) where appropriate, briefly integrate the content of this passage into broader biblical theology; (f) indicate how you would preach this material—outline, thrust, enough detail so it is clear how you are going to handle the text in the pulpit. The date for handing this in (June 1, 2011) is set by Ligonier. **50% of grade.**

### **Reading Report:**

Hand in to the Ligonier office, with the final assignment, a reading report, detailing what pages were read, on what dates. All reading (except of the Bible itself) connected with this course should be included. See attached form. Make additional copies of the form if necessary. [Obviously, the fore-sighted will make copies of the form *before* it is filled out!]

### **Oral Participation:**

The quality of the participation of the student in occasional class discussions will also be taken into account, by magnificently subjective criteria on the part of the instructor, who

will be looking for such immeasurables as penetration, care with the text, reflection of wide reading/knowledge, integration, and the like.

### **Initial Bibliography:**

There is no limit to the bibliography. A really good final paper cannot be prepared without access to a decent theological library. In addition to the commentaries written below, most of them reasonably substantial and all of them written within the last four decades, one might usefully consult several other kinds of works: (1) older commentaries (e.g., John Calvin, the massive work of John Owen, the two-volume work by Franz Delitzsch, the work by Moses Stuart); (2) foreign language works (e.g., the massive erudition of Hans-Friedrich Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, the excellent work of Samuel Bénétreau, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*); (3) many, many popular expositions (among the better ones, Ryken, Gooding, Kent Hughes; (4) countless monographs and essays on narrower topics within the book, for those with specialist interests.

The volumes below that have an asterisk are mentioned above in the Syllabus, and should receive special attention.

\*Attridge, Harold W. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989.

Bruce, F. F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. NICNT. Revised edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.

\*DeSilva, David A. *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle of Hebrews*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

Ellingworth, Paul. *Commentary on Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.

Guthrie, George H. *Hebrews*. NIVAC. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.

\*Hughes, Philip Edgcumbe. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977.

Johnson, Luke Timothy. *Hebrews: A Commentary*. NTL. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.

Kistemaker, Simon J. *Hebrews*. NTC. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984.

Koester, Craig R. *Hebrews: A Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AB 36. New York: Doubleday, 2001.

Lane, William L. *Hebrews 1-8, 9-13*. WBC 47A/B. Dallas: Word, 1991.

Mitchell, Alan C. *Hebrews*. SacPag. Collegeville: Liturgical, 2007.

\*O'Brien, Peter T. *The Letter to the Hebrews*. PNTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

Phillips, Richard D. *Hebrews*. RefExpComm. Phillipsburg: P&R, 2006.

Wilson, Geoffrey. *Hebrews: A Digest of Reformed Comment*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1979.

If your Greek is minimal, you might spend more time with Bruce, Johnson, DeSilva, Hughes, and Lane; you may perhaps skip Attridge and Ellingworth, which are accessible only to those with passable Greek. The O'Brien commentary is one of the rare works accessible to all but interacting with Greek in a responsible way. Those with no Greek may replace the asterisked Attridge with either Bruce or Johnson.

### **Further Bibliographical Note:**

Part of your responsibility, at this level of your training, is to spend some time in the relevant section of the stacks of a good theological library. Pick up such information as the following:

(1) The characteristics of some of the major commentaries: e.g. F. F. Bruce (NICNT) is a standard mid-level work on the English text, with footnotes on the Greek text; Philip E. Hughes is excellent for surveying the history of interpretation; some volumes dance along the interface between exegesis and homiletics (e.g. the BST series); and so forth.

(2) Scan the bibliographies provided by the most recent commentaries for articles of particular interest to you, and scan a selection of them.

(3) Note some of the more important monographs on Hebrews that you will find in the stacks—e.g. a substantial number of works on how Hebrews uses the OT.

Obviously, in one modular course you cannot get a thorough grasp of all the literature. But you need to become exposed to some of what is out there, how to find it, and become familiar with at least a little of it. You will not be *directly* graded on any of this reading. Yet the purpose of the course is not simply to learn the text plus three or four commentaries on the text, but to enlarge your horizons. How much you do will reflect your energy, time allotments, gifts: there is no simple “right” or “wrong” amount. You can “pass” without spending much time in a library. This is primarily for your education, your discipleship, not primarily for your grade. But the results will inevitably show up in the depth of penetration of your final paper, so that there is an *indirect* grading of such work.

