

Reformed Theological Seminary, Washington, D. C.
January 2006

6NT508 Gospels 3 Hrs
3 – 7 January 2006 8:30 A. M. – 5:00 P. M.

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Description (as per *RTS Catalogue*)

“Attention is given to each writer’s literary art, theological teaching, pastoral purpose, and message for today’s church and world” (p.64).

Course Objectives

- (1) To understand and to evaluate critically academic research in the life of Jesus.
- (2) To identify the major periods of the ministry of Christ and to identify significant events within those periods.
- (3) To understand issues of special introduction pertaining to each Gospel.
- (4) To understand and to articulate the distinctive features of each canonical Gospel.
- (5) To understand and to articulate key aspects of the person and work of Christ as revealed in the Gospels.

Required Texts (see below for page assts.)

- (1) The Holy Bible, preferably in a recent translation such as the New American Standard, English Standard Version, New King James, or the New International Version.
- (2) Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (3d ed.)
- (3) D.A. Carson and Douglas Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (2d ed.)
- (4) Craig Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*
- (5) Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*

Assignments & Requirements

- (1) To read and to prepare a digest of Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (3d ed.), pp. 1 – 47, 396 – 582. See attached guidelines. **Due the first class meeting.** Late work will result in proportionate grade reduction. 10% of the final grade.
- (2) To attend faithfully and to participate in each class meeting. Your final exam (below) will contain questions from lectures.
- (3) To complete a take-home final exam. The exam will be distributed on the last day of class. The exam must be submitted to me (electronically or by post) not later than 5 P.M., Saturday, January 21, 2006. Late work will result in proportionate grade reduction. 30% of the final grade.

- (4) To read in full Carson, Moo, and Morris, pp. 77 – 284; Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*; and Ridderbos, *Coming of the Kingdom*. Prepare a digest of each reading and submit these three digests to me (electronically or by post) not later than 5 P.M., Saturday, February 18, 2006. Late work will result in proportionate grade reduction. See attached guidelines. 20% of the final grade.
- (5) To prepare a 12-15 page research paper. This paper must be submitted to me (electronically or by post) not later than 5 P.M. Saturday, February 18, 2006. Late work will result in proportionate grade reduction. See attached guidelines. 40% of the final grade. Submit to me (by e-mail) a brief paper proposal for my approval not later than January 14, 2006.

Guidelines – Digests (adapted from Dr. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.'s guidelines)

Please prepare a digest of each assigned reading, double-spaced or 1.5 spaced. A written digest is not simply a repetition but a summary or overview organized to highlight the author's main ideas and distinctive emphases. It may have one of several formats – an outline, a running commentary, a series of brief paragraphs. It should be concise without being superficial. A digest is not a response paper. I want to see that you have understood what you have read.

Your Ferguson digest should be not longer than 5 pages. Your Blomberg, Ridderbos, and Carson and Moo digests should be not longer than 5-7 pages each.

Guidelines – Research Paper

The following are baseline expectations for your research paper. I have formed and adapted some of them from others' guidelines. Please read them carefully. If you have any questions, please ask them well in advance of the deadline. Failure to abide by these guidelines will result in reduced credit or no credit for this assignment.

- (1) **Thesis:** I expect you to have a clear, well-articulated thesis. A thesis is not a topic. A thesis develops an idea about a topic. A good thesis will address what is not obvious, not certain, or what is debated. You should direct your attention, then, to some 'problem' occasioned by the passage OR some insight that is not intuitive to the casual reader. Note the examples:

TOPIC: 'faith' in Paul.

POOR THESIS: Faith is very important to the apostle Paul.

GOOD THESIS: Paul's contrast between 'faith' and 'works' structures his argument in the Epistle to the Romans.

- (2) **Argumentation:** Your paper should be an extended argument, not a collection of observations about your passage. Your thesis must be the organizing principle of your paper's argument. Your paper's argument should be developed in paragraphs. Each paragraph should be organized around a topic sentence that articulates and advances some part of your thesis. You should think of each paragraph as a unique installment in your argument: your paper should build argumentative 'momentum' as it moves along. In so doing, you should anticipate objections and respond to counter-proposals. Note the example.

Observations: In Galatians 2, Paul tells Peter that "We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles" (2:15). He then says that we are not "justified by the works of the law." Rather, we are justified "through

faith in Christ Jesus” (2:16). This does not mean that are to continue in sin (2:17). Paul says that this issue is so important that if we deny the truth, then we are saying that “Christ died needlessly.”

Argument: In Galatians 2, Paul argues in several ways that a sinner is justified by faith alone. He argues that it is impossible to be justified by the “works of the law” (2:16). He also argues that if justification could come by works, then Christ’s death was to no effect (2:21). Paul is also careful to show that the doctrine does not lead to a sinful life. Rather, he says, it is the only way that one may “live to God” (2:19, cf. 2:20).

(3) **Research:** Your paper should evidence competent interaction with the relevant secondary literature. You must show me that your thesis has been informed by your work in the secondary literature. You should expect to use several substantive commentaries and to use journal articles. **Apart from the instructor’s permission, no Internet sources of any kind may be used.** For journal articles, consult *New Testament Abstracts* or the ATLA database. For commentaries, consult D. A. Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey* (5th ed.). Be sure to footnote your sources. At the end of your paper, be sure to include a bibliography of works cited.

(4) **Documentation:** Be sure that you understand this institution’s policy on plagiarism very well. You must follow the following guidelines on documentation of the secondary literature.

(A) **Don’t dump quotes grammatically.** Rather, incorporate quotes into the grammatical structure of your sentences. This will mean that you will sometimes need to alter the quote itself slightly in order to make it ‘fit’ the grammatical pattern of the rest of the sentence. Use square brackets [] to indicate material that you have inserted. Use ellipsis ... to indicate places where you have cut material.

(B) **Don’t dump quotes stylistically.** Use this method for incorporating directly quoted material:

(1) **Quote:** Give the quote. Double check for accuracy. Misquoting is a common (but nevertheless egregious) error. Do not give long quotes. Make sure that you include only so much from your secondary source as is needed to support your point.

(2) **Analysis:** It is not enough simply to give a quote. You should directly link the quoted material to your argument. Don’t assume that readers will make the connection; often they don’t.

Note this example:

For Paul, issues of personal salvation are fundamental in the book of Romans. Recent scholars have argued that the “relationship between the two peoples – Jews and Gentiles” is the basic “theme of Romans” (Moo, 28). These scholars, however, “have overreacted to the neglect of [the theme of] ... the transformation of the individual ... among earlier interpreters” (Moo, 28). While the tension between Jew and Gentile may be part of Paul’s concern in this letter, it is not his primary concern.

(C) For stylistic format, consult Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (6th ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996), but chiefly use *The SBL Handbook of Style* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999).