

COS 321 - Bible III: Gospels

Summer 2016

Prof. Gregory J. Riley
griley@cst.edu

Academic Building 218

This course focuses on the content and message of the Gospels, as well as the theological perspectives of the Gospel writers. The course will emphasize the practice of exegesis.

Student Learning Outcomes Successful students will be able to:

1. Understand the origin, message, and purpose of each Gospel.
2. Exegete this form of literature.
3. Apply exegesis to preaching, other pastoral responsibilities, and issues of the present day.

Textbooks [available through on-line sources]:

Mark Allen Powell, *Introducing the New Testament*.

Frederick Murphy, *An Introduction to Jesus and the Gospels*.

Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*.

Supplementary Books:

Sharon Ringe, *Luke* (Westminster Bible Companion).

D. Moody Smith, *John* (Abingdon New Testament Commentaries).

Carl R. Holladay, *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament: Interpreting the Meaning and Message of Jesus Christ*.

Suggested Book:

Gregory J. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs*. Fortress Press.

Riley (*One Jesus*) is a book on Christology (what opinions different Christian groups had about Christ) and demonstrates how and why the story of Jesus was so popular in the Greco-Roman world.

Two Pre-class Assignments: Due June 24, 2016.

Please email both assignments to Prof. Riley at griley@cst.edu.

Assignment One: The Reasons for Writing the Gospels.

Please describe what two of our textbooks [Powell, Murphy, Holladay, et al.] have to say about the reasons that each of the Gospels was written, in approximately four pages. You may write more if you wish, but four pages are sufficient. Please cite NT Gospel passages to illustrate your points. For example, John tells us in John 20:31 his major reason for writing. There are other reasons, and Powell, Murphy, and Holladay will help you discover them.

Assignment Two: The Authors.

Please write an account in four pages of what two of our textbooks [same list as above] tell us about the authors of our four Gospels. Again, you may write more if you wish, but four pages are sufficient. Who were they? When and where did they write?

The Course

The course will engage the main issues found in our Gospels, treated in the order Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John.

The course will consist of seven sessions of approximately three hours each. The student should expect to invest a further one to two hours each day outside of class in preparation for class.

Exegesis Papers:

"Exegesis" is a transliterated Greek word that means "explanation." One exegetes, that is explains, the meaning of a Biblical text in its historical context, using all the tools available to the scholar: language, history, archeology, ancient literature, and especially other Biblical texts. These help us to understand what the author meant and intended, including helping to evaluate the author's assumptions and biases. That is the historical-critical method used by all competent scholars.

Learning to do exegesis is one of the main purposes of this course. Do not worry if you are new to exegesis. We will work on it together in class.

Exegesis Papers: Each student will hand in three short papers that exegete the Bible passages indicated. These should be written so that they may serve, it is hoped, as the basis for sermons and/or Bible studies. The three papers may be chosen from the list below of four topics [Extra credit will be given if a student does all four]. The papers are to address the issues listed and are due on the days assigned. They are to be typed (if possible; if not, hand written is acceptable), correct in grammar, spelling and syntax, and approximately three pages in length.

Day 3 - Exegesis Paper #1: Mark 4:1-20 The Parable of the Sower.

Please include discussion of:

Mark 8:17 Are your hearts hardened?

Mark 8:35 35 For those who want to save their life will lose it...

Mark 10:20 Sell what you own, and give the money to the poor....

Mark 13:13 The one who endures to the end will be saved.

These verses illustrate the issues raised in the parable [the kinds of soil] and allow us to explain the parable using Mark's own ideas.

Day 5 - Exegesis Paper #2: Matt 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart.

Please include discussion of:

Matt 12:33-35 A tree is known by its fruit. ... For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Matt 15:1-20 18 But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles.

Matt 23:25-26 First clean the inside of the cup.

Day 6 - Exegesis Paper #3: Luke 17:21 The Kingdom of God is inside you.

Please include discussion of:

Luke 16:16 The law and the prophets were in effect until John came.

Luke 12:32 Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Luke 13:20-21 [The kingdom] is like leaven....

Luke 13:28-30 29 Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God.

Day 7 - Exegesis Paper #4: John 15:1-10 The Vine and the Vinedresser.

Please include discussion of:

John 1:4 In him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

John 7:37-38 Let the one who believes in me drink. Out of one's innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.

John 8:12 I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

Final At-Home Examination:

A Do-at-Home one-hour "examination" is required at the end of the course to be e-mailed in two weeks after the final day of class. The general subject will be: "The kingdom of God in the Gospels." A great deal of the course will deal with the Kingdom of God, and students will receive handouts on the KG to help with this exam. Students are encouraged to write

COS 321 - Bible III: Gospels

this exam as sermon or Bible study material. Make sense out of these Bible passages for your hearers or congregation.

The exam is designed for one hour. You write for one hour or so, producing four to eight pages, although four are sufficient. You, however, may take as much time as you wish to prepare. You may use all of your notes, books, and helps of any kind. You may even discuss your exam with your classmates. Open books, open notes, open discussion, but individual composition. No collaboration in writing the exam is allowed. You must write your own exam in your own words with your own ideas.