



**SCHOOL FOR MINISTRY**  
The Episcopal Diocese of San Diego

# NEW TESTAMENT 1

## SYLLABUS Fall Semester 2022

Taught by  
David Moseley, Ph.D.

Mondays ~ 6:00-8:00 p.m.  
Online Classes on Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88920877779?pwd=VXB5UFgraFJxclNyczIxUndXMFY2QT09>

*Welcome to New Testament 1!* This class continues to explore the discipline of academic Biblical Studies, building on the material covered in Hebrew Bible 1 – specifically, the literature of the Gospels, which are Ancient Religious Biographies written about Jesus of Nazareth.

### ***“New Testament” or “Christian Scriptures”?***

The preferred terminology today is “Christian Scriptures” rather than “New Testament.” Referring to the Bible as the “Old” and “New” Testaments might suggest to Jews that their sacred scriptures are out-dated compared to the “New” Christian Testament, or have been superseded. [Remember: The Hebrew Scriptures are the sacred texts of Judaism, however important they might be to Christians - primarily *because* they were the sacred scriptures of Jesus of Nazareth, a Jew...and Paul.] Also, as we will see, the language of “Old” and “New” Testaments imposes a “Christocentric” interpretive framework on the Hebrew Bible that is liable to corrupt or distort the original meaning of the texts. [In Judaism, the preferred term of art for their sacred writings is *Tanakh* – an acrostic made up from the three first letters of the three principal sections of the Hebrew Bible: (1) The *Torah* (the “Teachings”); (2) the *Nevi'im* (the “Prophets”, which includes History Books); and (3) the *Ketuvim* (the Miscellaneous “Writings”) – hence, ***TaNaKh***.]

***The Mission of the Class is to Nurture Students towards a Nuanced, Critical Interpretation and Understanding of the Texts of the Christian Scriptures.*** The Christian Scriptures are the most widely-read and influential set of texts in human history, and builds upon the many stories about God’s covenant relationship with the Jews in the Hebrew Bible by focusing on two new stories:

1. The story of Jesus of Nazareth – his Life, Death, and Resurrection
2. The story of the Early Church – the Community of the Followers of Jesus

In essence, the Christian Scriptures synthesize these two stories as the *witness* (“Testament”) of the earliest Christians who wish to proclaim that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah (“Christ”), and that this is “Good News” (Gospel) signifying salvation for the whole world. This class is the first part of a two-part course that forms an introductory survey of the various writings compiled into the Christian Scriptures.

In New Testament 1, much of our focus will be on the figure of Jesus as we study the Gospels. We will consider just *who* this man was, or *is*, and *what* he really taught, and *how* we are supposed to ascribe significance to his life, words, deeds, and death – and reputed resurrection. Advances in archeological discovery, historical research and textual scholarship allow us to survey this person from a critical vantage point hitherto unavailable to previous generations. And yet, Jesus of Nazareth stubbornly refuses to disclose himself fully and transparently under the microscope of scholarship. Was he an ethical teacher? Or a miracle-worker and exorcist? Or a great prophet? Or a political revolutionary? Or a spiritual mystic? Or an apocalyptic firebrand? Or was he a madman, or a fraud? How did he come to be executed as a despised blasphemer in the opinion of his contemporaries, and a subversive criminal as far as the Roman authorities were concerned?

And the greatest mystery of all: *How did an artisan from an obscure part of the Roman Empire within a relatively short period come to be regarded as the ‘Chosen One’, the resurrected Son of God, the Messiah, the Christ, such that men and women would die for their confession of faith in him — this human being they believed to be an incarnated revelation of God, who bridged the chasm separating heaven and earth, between time and eternity?*

These are some of the questions we will be examining during the course of this class. Starting with the social, political and religious world in which Jesus lived, we will examine the portrayal of Jesus in the four Gospels, noting their particular emphases, before trying to get behind the Gospels to catch a glimpse of the ‘historical Jesus.’

The literature found in the New Testament was composed and edited over the course of approximately 50-70 years. Students will be exposed to the literary genres, forms and motifs that comprise these writings. The texts will be placed in the historical, cultural, sociological and religious milieu of their audience. Students will learn a variety of techniques, which are helpful in the analysis of Biblical texts: these include analysis of form and structure, as well as genre, historical and redaction criticism. Students will be encouraged to put knowledge to use as they apply Biblical interpretation to theological construction and pastoral practice.

## **Course Objectives**

Students who have completed the New Testament classes will hopefully be able to:

- Distinguish between various Interpretative Methods used to Study, Examine, Analyze, Research, and Comprehend Biblical Texts
- Understand the Historical Context within which the Religious Texts of Early Christianity were Created and Read / Heard
- Appreciate the various Literary Genres found in the texts of the New Testament, and Understand their Functions for Interpretation
- Be aware of the Social and Cultural Issues Relevant to the Formation of the Texts and their Ethical Implications
- Comprehend the Significance, Relevance, and ongoing Influence of the New Testament Texts on Contemporary Life and Debates, both inside and outside of the Church

### **“B.C.” or “B.C.E.”? “A.D.” or “C.E.”?**

When did “B.C.” and “A.D.” change to “B.C.E.” (Before the Common Era) and “C.E.” (Common Era), and why? Is this more unnecessary political correctness from the Academy? As with “Old Testament” and “New Testament,” the method of dating history according to the epochs of “Before Christ (B.C.)” and “Anno Domini (A.D.)” (Latin for “*In the year of our Lord*”) imposes a Christocentric standard of time on historical eras...which was convenient for a period when Christianity was the religion of the dominant (European) colonial powers...but is more and more untenable in a diverse and multicultural world (in both the academy and among everyday folks) where the majority of the global population does not acknowledge Jesus Christ as the be-all-and-end-all of human history. Furthermore, the ancient monk responsible for this division of eras wasn’t that great at math, and it’s more likely than not that Jesus was born approximately 6-4 B.C.E. (just before the death of Herod the Great in 4 B.C.E.). Nevertheless, the Christian calendar – like the English language – has become the default standard of globalization; but to mitigate the religious and cultural dominance of one particular system of measuring time, the preferred, *more neutral* universal terminology used today is “B.C.E.” (Before the Common Era) and “C.E.” (Common Era).

This class will be divided up as follows:

### **Part One: Introduction to the World of the New Testament**

**2 Weeks** (September 12<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>)

Part 1 of the Class will focus on situating Jesus of Nazareth in the world in which he lived, taught, ministered, suffered and died. It is a strange, ancient, exotic (to us) world at the intersection of indigenous Judaism and the occupying external influence of the Roman Empire. In order to properly understand the Gospels and the stories that they relate, it is vital to appreciate the intricacies of these intersecting worlds – the politics and structures of power, socio-economic divisions, competing religious factions, and cultural worldviews that shaped and defined ancient Palestine, creating a unique set of circumstances within which the “Jesus Movement” gestated and thrived.

### **Part Two: The Gospels**

**8 Weeks** (September 26<sup>th</sup>, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup>, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>)

Part 2 of the Class will be a detailed examination of each of the four Gospels, in chronological order: (1) Mark, the earliest Gospel, used as a source by (2) Matthew and

(3) Luke (collectively they form the “Synoptic Gospels” due to the huge similarities between these texts); and lastly (4) John. The four Gospels are different accounts of the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, and we will be focusing on identifying the different forms of storytelling and contrasting thematic emphases in each Gospel. We will also be delving into the socio-historical background of the communities of early Christians from which these Gospels emerged, and the specific concerns of these communities that the Gospels express and address.

### **Part Three: The Quest for the Historical Jesus**

**2 Weeks** (November 28<sup>th</sup> & December 5<sup>th</sup>)

Finally, at the end of the class we will be considering some of the issues that dominate what is known as “The Quest for the Historical Jesus” – namely, epistemological questions about method and analysis of Gospel textual criticism, and the varying portraits and categorizations of Jesus that emerge from this process.

**FINALS DUE DATE:** Monday 12<sup>th</sup> December

**PLEASE NOTE:** There will be **NO** class on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> October (Indigenous Peoples’ Day).

### **Materials and Class Format**

Pre-Semester Reading for the class is *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* by Marcus Borg & N.T. Wright [2<sup>nd</sup> Edition] (HarperOne, 2007).

Our main text for this class is the Bible, and we will be using the following translation and edition:

*The New Oxford Annotated Bible - New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) with the Apocrypha* (5<sup>th</sup> Ed.) edited by Michael Coogan (Oxford, 2018)

[The *New Oxford Annotated Bible* is \$28 new in hardback on Amazon, and contains a wealth of useful introductory essays, maps, and annotations – and will be required for all Bible Classes at SfM. As this text is thick and will be used a lot, I strongly recommend the more durable hardcover.]

As we study the four Gospels, we will also be using the following text:

*Four Gospels, One Jesus? A Symbolic Reading* by Richard Burridge [3<sup>rd</sup> Edition] (Eerdmans, 2014)

Handouts and Outlines will be provided, as well as access to other Online Resources. You are expected to complete assigned Readings and Written Assignments before each class, and pay attention and take notes during class, which will form the basis for your Study for Assessments. This Course uses a “Flipped Classroom” methodology – rather than the teacher lecturing students in order to transmit content, students are expected to have absorbed primary content through weekly reading and assignments, enabling secondary reflection and analysis to take place through guided classroom discussion in a Seminar-Style Setting.

The class is designed according to the “Five Pedagogical Characteristics” of the School for Ministry:

1. *The Seminar Table* - Classes at the SFM take place around the seminar table. Different from the lecture hall, the classroom that gathers around the seminar table is necessarily interactive between faculty and students.
2. *An Inquiry-Based Curriculum* - The curriculum of the SFM is an inquiry-based curriculum wherein academic material is critically explored by the student body in preparation for and during class time via the leadership of faculty who act as facilitators to the critical inquiry of their students.
3. *A Place-Based Curriculum* - The ministry contexts for students are seen as sources of a two-way interaction between classroom theory and ministerial practice.
4. *An Integrated Curriculum* - Recognizing that theology and ministry make an integrated whole, the SFM's curriculum encourages the cross-fertilization of ideas between subject areas.
5. *A Skills-Based Curriculum* - The cultivation of critical thinking skills for ministry lies at the heart of the SFM's pedagogical philosophy. Successful completion of a course of study at the SFM should result in a student having grown in the use of such skills and an ability to apply them across academic disciplines and in their everyday practice of ministry.

## **Procedures and Grading**

Grades for the class will be based on weekly Assignments (usually in the form of brief written reflections), occasional Projects and Presentations, Exegesis Papers, and Examinations. Because the class is a Seminar-Style class based on Discussion, Students will also be evaluated based on their Contributions to Class, as well as other ways in which they enrich the class through their Curiosity, Cooperation, and Citizenship.

Every student is expected to attend class on time, complete assigned reading, be prepared for assessments, turn in completed work done to the best of your ability before the deadline (via e-mail), and show an interest in learning. *If you don't think you will be able to make a deadline for whatever reason, please contact your teacher immediately in person or by e-mail. Indeed, if there are any issues or concerns that you have that might prevent you from performing at your best in the class, please contact your teacher immediately so that we can try to figure out a solution.* All Assignments and Assessments will be explained in detail both in class and through postings on the SfM class website ahead of time. Please feel free to ask for help when you do not understand class material or assignments.

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*Best Wishes for the Class!*