

HEBREWS TO REVELATION (NT5350)

SYLLABUS, FALL 2023, RTS-NYC

I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to better understand the (often under-appreciated) latter section of the canon. That understanding, however, requires not only growing in knowledge but also and even preeminently growing in wisdom, maturity, and love for God. Additionally we want to see how this section of God's word equips us to be better shepherds of those that God has put in our care, better ministers and servants of his Word.

Due to the brevity of our time together we will have to proceed selectively. Rather than working linearly through the entirety of each book we will highlight important themes and passages, attempting to understand those themes in the context of their place within their own books and in redemptive history. While I hope to focus in some detail on important particulars, the choice of these particulars will be determined by a broader concern: to see how these books augment, magnify, and deepen our understanding of God's plan for redemption, a redemption that is cosmic in scope and yet intimately personal and practical.

In short, this section of our Bible is often mysterious and confusing to us, and this is perhaps because we do not have a big enough Gospel. Thus we are involved in a beautiful spiral: studying the General Epistles and Revelation expands our understanding of the Gospel, and that understanding in turn helps us to better appreciate and appropriate these wonderful and encouraging books. And all this that we might draw nearer to our Great High Priest who reigns even now in heaven!

B. DATES AND TIMES

The class will meet as posted on the course website. You will be required to attend two weekend sessions and several Tuesday sessions via Zoom.

Unless otherwise noted, all assignments will be due at the end of the term, December 15 at 11:59 pm.

C. INSTRUCTOR

Thomas Keene

email: tkeene@rts.edu (this is the fastest way to reach me)

Net: <http://signandshadow.com> <http://twitter.com/tommykeene>

<http://facebook.com/keenetommy>

D. COURSE WEBSITE

You can find all course documents and some of the readings online via Canvas. All announcements will be made through that site and all assignments should be submitted there. There will also be opportunities to discuss via the forums. Make sure you have access to Canvas before the first day of class.

However, Canvas is fairly limited in its conversational abilities, so if you have a question or comment, please do so by following these guidelines:

- If your question is in any way suited for a public environment—ie, it might be helpful to others—please use the “student-to-professor” section of the discussion module in Canvas to ask it.
- If your question is more mundane or private, email me.
- Do not use the Canvas email system as it is not suited for lengthy conversations. Email me directly at tkeene@rts.edu

II. REQUIRED READING

The following readings are required and are a graded portion of the class. You will be required to fill out a “reading completion form,” stating on-your-honor the percentage of each reading that you completed. Partial credit will *not* be given for article-length readings.

Many of the readings are article or chapter length and will be provided to you (no need to purchase). I have used a star (*) to indicate books (or articles in books) that I recommend purchasing (they will not be provided online).

Note: These readings are not being assigned to give you “the right answers” but rather to call you to engage in an ongoing dialog with Scripture and with those who interpret the Scriptures. Please read with humility and “critical appreciation.”

A. BIBLE READING

Read (or listen to) each book in a single sitting, preferably from a Reader’s Bible (<https://www.crossway.org/bibles/esv-readers-bible-cob/>).

Read through each book a second time, this time making a list of distinct textual and exegetical questions you can think of. You will turn in this list as part of your reading report.

B. PRIMARY SOURCES

You will be assigned short primary source readings throughout the semester at critical junctures (ie, when we get to the portion of class for which that reading is relevant). This will include selections from Philo, Sirach, 1 Enoch, The Testament of Moses, among others. You will be assigned these selections through the “Discussions” module in Canvas, your engagement with which will contribute to your participation grade. We may also discuss some of these in class.

Note: though many of these sources are patterned after Scripture, they are not inspired. They provide the background within which the Biblical books that we are studying were written and understood. Our goal is to read them critically but appreciatively, and then to discuss them as a class to gain insights in reading the NT.

C. SPECIAL INTRODUCTION

* Jobes, Karen H. *Letters to the Church: A Survey of Hebrews and the General Epistles*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.

D. HEBREWS

OPTIONAL: Barrett, C. K. “The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews.” Pages 363-93 in *The Background of the NT and Its Eschatology*. Edited by W. D. Davies and D. Daube. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954.

Caird, George Bernard. "The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews." *Canadian Journal of Theology* 5 (1959): 44-51.

Gaffin, R. B. "Christ, Our High Priest in Heaven." *Kerux*, 1986.
<http://www.kerux.com/documents/KeruxV01N3A2.asp>.

Schreiner, T. "Perseverance and Assurance: A Survey and a Proposal." *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, no. 2 (1998): 32-62. Available online at
http://www.sbts.edu/docs/tschreiner/2.1_article.pdf

Silva, M. "Perfection and Eschatology in Hebrews." *Westminster Theological Journal* 39 (1976): 60-71.

E. JAMES

Bauckham, R. James: *Wisdom of James, Disciple of Jesus the Sage*. London: Routledge, 1999. Pages 1-73, 93-157. [Available on Amazon, or for rent on a Kindle, or in the library. It's expensive, so you do NOT need to buy it (though it is a great resource)—wait for class.]

McCartney, D. G. "Suffering in James." Pages 477-486 in *The Practical Calvinist*. Edited by P. A. Lillback. Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2002.

F. 1 PETER, 2 PETER, JUDE

Bautch, K. C. "'Awaiting New Heavens and a New Earth': The Apocalyptic Imagination of 1-2 Peter and Jude." Pages 63-82 in *Reading 1-2 Peter and Jude: A Resource for Students*. Edited by E. F. Mason and T. W. Martin. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014.

J. de Waal Dryden, *Theology and Ethics in 1 Peter: Paraenetic Strategies for Christian Character Formation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006): 64-89.

Dunnett, Walter M. "The Hermeneutics of Jude and 2 Peter: The Use of Ancient Jewish Traditions." *JETS* 31, no. 3 (1988): 287-92.

OPTIONAL: Selwyn, E. G. "Eschatology in 1 Peter." Pages 394-401 in *The Background of the NT and Its Eschatology*. Edited by W. D. Davies and D. Daube. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956.

G. REVELATION, JOHANNINE EPISTLES

* Bauckham, R. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Helm, D. R. *An Approach to Apocalyptic Literature: A Primer for Preachers*. The Simeon Trust, 2009.

Poythress, V. S. "Counterfeiting in the Book of Revelation as a Perspective on Non-Christian Culture." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40, no. 3 (1997): 411-18. Available online at http://www.frame-poythress.org/poythress_articles/1997Counterfeiting.htm

---. "Genre and Hermeneutics in Rev 20:1-6." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36 (1993): 41-54. Available online at http://www.frame-poythress.org/poythress_articles/1993Genre.htm

III. ASSESSMENT

Your final grade will be determined by three factors: (1) your completion of the required reading, (2) a 10-15 exegetical paper on a text of your choosing, (3) a four-question "final exam."

A. BIBLE READING (8%)

B. READING (7%)

On the day you take the final exam you will also be required to fill out a form stating the percentage of reading that you completed. Each of your required reading assignments will be listed and you will be required to estimate, on your honor, the percentage of each you completed. I consider a book "read" if you have made every effort to understand its main points and the various justifications offered for that point. This usually requires reading and comprehending each paragraph, but not necessarily each word or sentence. In short: skimming is permissible at certain points and in certain cases, but not skipping.

Partial credit will NOT be given for the Bible Reading assignments or for article/chapter length material.

C. PARTICIPATION (20%)

You are expected to be actively engaged in class. This of course includes regular attendance, but in addition you should be interacting with readings, asking questions, sharing your insights, and debating the issues. Discussion will be a regular part of the course rhythm, in addition to lecture material.

There will be occasional **primary source reading assignments** during the class. You will be given two weeks to complete these readings (they will be short) in preparation for class discussion, during which you will be expected to critically engage the material and winsomely participate in the class conversation.

I do realize that everyone participates in a different way, and so other avenues for engagement are available, including through the online course discussion forums and other means. If you think you might have trouble meeting the requirement, don't hesitate to ask me how to move forward.

Half of your participation grade will be determined by your contribution to **forum responses** as detailed below.

D. EXEGETICAL PAPER (40%)

You are required to write a 10-15 (double-spaced) page exegetical research paper on a text of your choosing from the Gospels. The paper should be submitted on canvas no later than the last day of the final exam period. Since this is a research paper, you should consult several exegetical commentaries on your chosen passage as well as academic articles and other resources.

While you are not *required* to send me your topic and thesis beforehand, doing so is recommended, particularly if this is one of your first exegetical papers. (If you would prefer to write a Biblical-Theological paper on the Gospels, or some other equivalence, you should talk to me first).

A rubric is provided in Canvas detailing how the paper is graded.

1. TEXT SELECTION

Text selection can make or break an exegetical paper, so choose your text carefully. Your text needs to be short enough that you can do it justice in the space of 10-15 pages, but long enough that it can stand on its own and has its own integrity. Aim for about a paragraph, maybe two if necessary. It is not always easy to determine where your paragraph begins and ends—different English translations and Biblical commentaries divide the text differently (there are no paragraphs in the “original,” at least not as we might consider them), so you will need to do a little research before coming to a final decision. I suggest you pick a section of Scripture (a verse or two) that seems interesting to you, then do a little research on those verses to determine the beginning and ending of the paragraph in which they occur. That final paragraph (or two) should be the center-point of your paper.

2. WHAT IS AN EXEGETICAL PAPER

An exegetical paper, unlike a theological or thematic one, is centered upon one particular pericope of Scripture (a paragraph or two, depending on genre). That text is the heart of your paper, and your goal should be to explain what that text means in both its immediate and canonical context. By contrast, a *theological* paper is centered around a particular *topic or concept*, the discussion of which will require a multitude of biblical loci. A Biblical-Theological paper is similar to an exegetical paper, but is more concerned with analyzing how the text fits within the broader context of Scripture.

To put it another way: think of a paper as a reasoned answer to an interesting question. What makes an *exegetical* paper unique is that both the question asked, and the evidence put forward, are derived from a particular text of Scripture. It is truly *about* that text. This does not mean, of course, that you should ignore the surrounding context or the rest of the bible, but your chosen text is the center around which everything else is in orbit.

3. HOW DO I WRITE AN EXEGETICAL PAPER

Once you have picked a text that interests you (see above), begin your research by reading your text (and its surrounding context) over and over again. Go verse by verse and ask yourself tons of questions (and write them all down). No question is too simple (or too complex)! Sometimes the key to a text is found in the questions that seem “too obvious.” Make sure at least one of these questions is “What is the *point*?” In fact, several of your questions should be variations on that all-important idea. Why does Peter say it *that way*? Why does John include *this* in his argument? Why does the author of Hebrews go there? These are all *purpose* questions, and they are the most important ones to ask.

Now start answering your questions. Don't pick up a book or a commentary quite yet. Answer your questions first by prayerfully and humbly looking at the text itself. You will need to look at the immediate context of your passage. How does it fit into the flow of the book as a whole? How does it further the author's main point? Outline your text, and outline the book in which it occurs. These types of activities help you view the text as a small piece of a larger whole.

Once you have started to explore your text a little more a “main point” should begin to coalesce in your mind. Try to write down that main point in a sentence or so. Aim for a “tweetable” main point. Then broaden your horizons. What is the main point of this section of the book? What is the main point of the book as a whole? And how does this book contribute to our overall understanding of the canon, of redemptive history, and of the Christian life?

Only after you have at least preliminary answers to these questions are you ready to crack open a commentary. Start researching your passage in reliable commentaries and articles (the *Word* series of commentaries usually have excellent bibliographies you can consult). In the course of your research you will be able to refine and develop (or reject) the ideas you have already come to on your own.

Now it's time to start writing. Sketch up a preliminary outline. Your organization will of course be dependent on your passage and the main point you want to make, but I suggest you start narrow (that is, with the details of your text) and work your way out (that is, with the literary and then canonical context of your text). After a brief introduction, start by explaining the immediate concerns of the text you picked. Are there any translation issues to note? Any strange words? Describe the flow of the argument and tell us the main point being made. Next, describe how your passage fits into the broader context of the book—start with the immediate context and then increasingly “zoom out” until the whole book is in view. As a final concern, show how your passage deepens our understanding of the Bible as a whole, how it fits into the Gospel of our redemption (this is not the major emphasis of an exegetical paper, but it's good to do). Along the way, or at the end, you can feel more than free to make some “practical applications.”

4. GREEK REQUIREMENT

If you have taken Greek please use it in your paper. Provide your own translation of the passage that you picked and justify that translation when appropriate. Use Greek when appropriate throughout. You do not need to be detailed here, but if you know Greek use it!

5. FORMAT

Your paper should be double spaced with 1-inch margins. Use Times New Roman or equivalent font, 12pt. Cite all your sources following the guidelines laid out in the *SBL Handbook* or the *Chicago Manual of Style* (I'm fine with either the “standard” method or the newer author-date format) You might want to consider using bibliography software, such as the free Zotero plugin for Firefox to make this process easier. Include a bibliography with all the works you cited in your paper as described in the aforementioned guides.

6. FURTHER INFORMATION

You can find additional guidance on writing an academic paper on my blog, starting here: <http://www.signandshadow.com/2017/11/02/how-to-write-a-seminary-paper-part-1-the-thesis/>

E. POSITION PAPERS (EXAM) (25%)

There will not be a traditional final exam for this class. Instead you will be given the opportunity to respond to four technical or controversial matters related to the Gospels. The responses should be no more than three pages in length and should follow all of the ordinary expectations for academic paper writing. The intent is to give you an opportunity to carefully work through some of the knotty problems we will encounter along the way.

You can approach this assignment as an “open note, open book, take home exam,” though, as mentioned above, it should be formatted like an academic paper. Good answers will reflect an integration and appropriation of material derived from lectures, course readings, primary sources, and personal reflection and critique. Great answers will additionally utilize

independent research, and to that end a Bibliography of helpful resources will be provided for each topic above. The use of independent research is not required, but it will assist you in working through the issues.

IV. HYBRID/DE/ONLINE REQUIREMENTS (IF APPLICABLE)

Since a portion of this class includes synchronous and/or asynchronous lectures, you will be required to complete the following (and your participation grade will be determined by this requirement):

- You will need to watch 6-8 hours of video lectures by the professor, as posted in canvas.
- You will be required to response to **no less than 5 times in the “Student to Professor” forums on Canvas.**
- You will be required to participating **no less than 3 times in the “Student to Student” forums on Canvas.**

V. SCHEDULE AND OUTLINE

A detailed schedule of required and suggested readings and due dates will be provided on the first day of class, as will an outline of lecture material. Those wishing to get ahead should start by reading the Bible Reading and then the Special Introduction material for each book.

VI. GRADING SCALE

96-100 A	87-89 B+	Etc.
90-95 A-	83-86 B	<60 F
	80-82 B-	