Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary  
NT 502 BB: Interpreting the New Testament  
Boston Campus (CUME) 

Dr. Brian C. Labosier  
Office Hours: By appointment  
Summer 2012  
Saturdays, June 2, 23, 30; July 7, 21 (9 AM – 5 PM)  
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1. COURSE DESCRIPTION 

Students who have completed at least one term of Greek are introduced to the tools and methods of exegesis. Attention given to a variety of methods of interpretation (textual, lexical, grammatical, historical, literary) and bibliographic tools for exegesis and the method and procedures of interpretation. Students prepare an exegesis paper on the basis of the Greek text. Students who have not had Greek may take this course only with the permission of the professor. M.Div. students must complete GL 502 before or during this course. 

2. COURSE RELATIONSHIP TO THE CURRICULUM 

NT 502 is a required course for M.Div. students as well as students who are pursuing an M.A. in New Testament. This class assumes at least one term of Basic Greek but may be taken in conjunction with Basic Greek II. It serves as a prerequisite for Greek exegesis classes. 

3. COURSE OBJECTIVES 

In keeping with the GCTS Mission Statement, this course provides an integrated approach to “learning, resources and training through which men and women may acquire knowledge, gain skills and develop attitudes needed in Christ’s ministry.” When the student has completed this course he/she will have: 

1. Explored the importance of one’s own presuppositions regarding the nature of Scripture, its inspiration, inerrancy, sufficiency, and authority, both for the interpretive process and for developing a Christian world and life view. (This learning outcome is a focus of some class discussions and readings, and supports the values from Article 1 of the GCTS Mission Statement on seeking to “encourage students to become knowledgeable of God’s inerrant Word, competent in its interpretation, proclamation and application in the contemporary world,” and “to encourage in its students a love for Scripture,” Article 2 on seeking to “maintain academic excellence in the highest tradition of Christian scholarship” and to do so with “rigor and academic integrity,” and Article 3 on seeking “to become skilled in ministry.”) 

2. Surveyed the history of interpretation in order to recognize the diversity of approaches across different times, cultures, and geographical locations throughout church history. (This learning outcome is a focus of some class discussions and readings, and supports the values from Articles 1, 2 and 3 listed above.)
3. Been challenged to develop a proper approach to the theory and practice of biblical interpretation that one can use in one’s own life and ministry. (This learning outcome is a primary focus of class discussions, readings, and other assignments, and supports the values from Articles 1, 2 and 3 listed above.)

4. Gained experience using the basic tools and methods of biblical exegesis by demonstrating an ability to:
   a. analyze textual-critical issues,
   b. do lexical studies,
   c. study introductory issues, including the historical and cultural background,
   d. carry out a grammatical analysis of New Testament texts,
   e. use various methods to analyze the semantic structure of New Testament texts,

(The exegetical skills associated with this learning outcome are the primary focus of many of the class discussions, readings, and a written assignments, and supports the values from Articles 1, 2 and 3 listed above, especially the value of seeking “to teach exegetical skills by which they will be able to apply Scripture effectively” from Article 1.)

5. Demonstrated an ability to exegete and apply New Testament texts in ways that are faithful to Scripture and at the same time relevant and appropriate to one’s own life and ministry. (This learning outcome is a primary focus of many of the class discussions, readings, and the weekly written assignments, especially a major exegesis paper, and supports the values from Articles 1, 2 and 3 listed above, especially the values of seeking “to teach exegetical skills by which they will be able to apply Scripture effectively” from Article 1.)

6. Developed a sensitivity to the importance of contextualization and how the original application of a Scripture text often needs to be re-contextualized in culturally-informed and spiritually-sensitive ways. (This learning outcome is a primary focus of some of the class discussions, readings, and a written assignments, and supports the values from Articles 1, 2 and 3 listed above, and from Article 6 in seeking “to formulate the strategies that will lead to effective missions, evangelism and discipleship” as a part of the broader task of seeking “to make disciples from all peoples.”)

4. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

A. Required Resources

Greek New Testament, either the United Bible Societies *The Greek New Testament*, 4th edition, or Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th edition. Both are available in various bindings and printings and with various features: those with the Dictionary are preferable. *The UBS Greek New Testament: Reader’s Edition* (even the ones with some textual notes) is fine for reading the Greek text, but insufficient for doing NT textual criticism, and consequently is not acceptable for at least some assignments in this course. (MA students without Greek will need a good Greek-English interlinear.)


**B. Recommended Resources**


Any Greek analytic aids, reading guides to the Greek New Testament, or computer-based Bible programs may be used in this course (unless otherwise noted in certain assignments), including the following:  *A Reader's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* by Sakae Kubo (Zondervan, 1975);  *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* by Max Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor (Pontificio Istituto Biblico, various editions);  *The Linguistic Key to the New Testament* by Fritz Rienecker and Cleon L. Rogers (Zondervan, various editions),  *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* by Cleon L. Rogers, Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III (Zondervan, 1998) or Bible software program designed for Greek language study (e.g. Accordance, Gramcord, BibleWorks, Logos).

It is further assumed that students either own or have access to both of the following:  *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BDAG) by W. Bauer, *et al.* and revised and edited by Frederick William Danker, (3d ed.; University of Chicago Press, 2000) and  *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* by B. M. Metzger, (2d ed.; United Bible Societies, 1994).

**C. Assignments**

1.  Read the assigned texts according to the class schedule.  Students will submit a reading report on the last day of the term indicating the approximate amount of the reading they have completed for this course from the required texts.
2. Develop skills in exegesis through a series of weekly assignments designed to illustrate a comprehensive exegetical methodology.

Students will choose a passage of Scripture from the New Testament to use in these weekly exercises. Normally this passage will be the same passage used in the major exegetical paper. These assignments are designed in such a way that any research done for these weekly assignments may be used in the final exegesis paper.

This passage should be a complete unit of thought (normally a “paragraph” or so in length, and probably something in the range of 6-12 verses). You may secure approval for your passage by submitting your proposed passage in writing: either by a hard copy at class time or by email.

During class time we will use Jesus’ teachings on divorce and remarriage in Matthew 5:31-32 and 19:1-12 as a test case to illustrate these exegetical principles.

For any given assignment students will have the option of using either their own approved passage of Scripture as the basis for these weekly assignments or the class project texts of Matthew 5:31-32 and 19:1-12.

Students will answer each weekly assignment in a 1-2 page double-spaced paper using 12 point font and standard 1 inch margins. These assignments will be due according to the class schedule.

(1) Weekly Paper #1: Exegesis Step 1: Observe the text of your approved passage of Scripture or the class project texts of Matthew 5:31-32 or 19:1-12—and write down as many initial observations and questions that arise from the text as possible. This is also the time for you to begin working on an initial translation of your passage from Greek and making observations from the original language. You can feel free to include observations and questions even if they seem “obvious.” Hopefully during the course of this term we will build on these observations and answer many of these questions. The goal here is to get started simply by making some initial observations and asking as many preliminary questions for further study as possible. Be sure to make observations and not interpretations. For inspiration, see the classic story, “The Student, the Fish, and Agassiz” at http://people.bethel.edu/~dhoward/resources/Agassizfish/Agassizfish.htm. Due June 23.

(2) Weekly Paper #2: Exegesis Step 2: Translations and Textual Criticism:

Part 1: Read the text of your approved passage of Scripture or the class project texts of Matthew 5:31-32 or 19:1-12 in as many different versions as possible, and note any significant differences. This would be the time for you to wrap up your initial translation of your passage from the Greek and see how it compares with the various translations you are using. Some Bible software programs can help you with accessing and comparing a number of different versions. You probably will want to go through the text a verse at a time and note any significant differences. If you are able to read any other foreign languages, you can include these in your study as well. Summarize what you did (which translations you used), what differences you found, and how significant these differences seem to you.
Part 2: Analyze and evaluate one significant textual variation from your passage in either UBS4 or NA27. In preparation for this part of the assignment, read over the introductory material regarding the textual critical apparatus in your Greek NT. See also Roy Chiampa’s website on Resources for Textual Criticism at http://www.viceregency.com/TextCrit.htm. Again summarize what you did, what differences you found, and how significant these differences seem to you. Due June 23 (or ASAP afterwards if discussing this material in class on June 23 gives you more insight into how to complete this assignment).

(3) Weekly Paper #3: Exegesis Step 3: Observe the literary context of your approved passage of Scripture or the class project texts of Matthew 5:31-32 or 19:1-12 by exploring both (1) the immediate context of the passage (the surrounding verses and perhaps up to a chapter or two before and after if it seems relevant), and (2) the broader purposes and orientation of that particular book of the New Testament, including considerations of authorship, dating, original audience, purpose, etc. You can get further information about authorship, etc. from a good study Bible, a commentary on that book, or a New Testament introduction, but focus on coming up with your own observations and reflections on the literary context of the actual text and not on secondary sources. Due June 23 (or ASAP afterwards if discussing this material in class on June 23 gives you more insight into how to complete this assignment).

(4) Weekly Paper #4: Exegesis Step 4: Research the historical, geographical, and cultural background of your approved passage of Scripture or the class project texts of Matthew 5:31-32 or 19:1-12 through your own observations of Scripture and by using Bible dictionaries or other reference tools that may shed light on the background of the passage. For example for the class project texts in Matthew 5:31-32 and 19:1-12, you could pursue such broader topics as marriage and divorce and the differing positions on the legal grounds for divorce as understood by Philo, Josephus, Shammai and Hillel, and the Qumran community. Due June 23 (or ASAP afterwards if discussing this material in class on June 23 gives you more insight into how to complete this assignment).

(5) Weekly Paper #5: Exegesis Step 5: Research the meaning of one or more key words found in your approved passage of Scripture or the class project texts of Matthew 5:31-32 or 19:1-12 through lexical or word studies. Select a key Greek word that seems to require further study. You will probably want to focus your efforts on one or two Greek words at the most. Try to find other instances of usage where a given word is used elsewhere in the Bible, and see what you can learn from these other instances of usage. The goal is to try to fine-tune your understanding of the significant key words in your passage. Once you have done your own concordance based research, use BDAG and any other Greek lexicons or other Greek-based study tools to expand upon your lexical study. (You may also use any Bible software programs and/or internet resources you have access to in completing this assignment.) Due June 30 (or ASAP afterwards if discussing this material in class on June 30 gives you more insight into how to complete this assignment).

(6) Weekly Paper #6: Exegesis Step 6: Discern the grammatical structure of your approved passage of Scripture or the class project texts of Matthew 5:31-32 or 19:1-12. The question here
is one of syntax, or how the words fit together into sentences. You may also investigate any grammatical features by checking with Greek reference grammars and include these observations as well. Summarize your findings. Choose a sentence or so of the most significant portion of the passage and construct your own sentence diagram picturing the grammatical relationships within the sentence. (You will be given more explicit instructions in class.) Note: this is one assignment where you are forbidden to consult any sentence diagrams found in resources such as BibleWorks. Due June 30 (or ASAP afterwards if discussing this material in class on June 30 gives you more insight into how to complete this assignment).

(7) Weekly Paper #7: Exegesis Step 7: Discern the semantic structure of your approved passage of Scripture or the class project texts of Matthew 5:31-32 or 19:1-12 by noting conjunctions and other structural indicators in Greek. The question here is how are the ideas related to each other and the line of reasoning advanced in this passage. Summarize your findings. Begin with the material you used in your weekly paper #6 and take this material to the next step of analyzing its meaning. (You will be given more explicit instructions in class.) Due June 30 (or ASAP afterwards if discussing this material in class on June 30 gives you more insight into how to complete this assignment).

(8) Weekly Paper #9: Integration Steps 1-3: (1) Look up as many cross references in other places in the Bible as possible for your approved passage of Scripture or the class project texts of Matthew 5:31-32 or 19:1-12. Since different Bibles often have different systems of cross references you may want to compare several different editions. Also give special attention to possible parallel passages, as well as other passages of Scripture using similar motifs (such as marriage for the class case study example) and any other material in Scripture that may be related to the passage(s) under study. (2) Try to be sensitive to the general chronological location of the other material you discover in Scripture. Does seeing different passages of Scripture in their original chronological order in either the OT or the NT help you understand the proper biblical teachings on these passages? Summarize your findings. (3) Reflect upon how this passage contributes to our understanding of the major doctrines in Scripture especially our understanding of God and his ways. Summarize your findings. Due July 7 (or ASAP afterwards if discussing this material in class on July 7 gives you more insight into how to complete this assignment).

3. Prepare an 8-10 page exegesis paper that applies the tools and methods taught in this course explaining the meaning of your approved passage of Scripture or the class project texts of Matthew 5:31-32 or 19:1-12. This paper should include all the insights you developed along the way in the kinds of inductive studies you did in this course in your weekly assignments. A paper that primarily reflects insights from commentaries or other secondary sources will not be acceptable; still there is a place for consulting other resources such as these. Due July 21.

Among other things, this paper should reflect:
(1) key observations you made regarding the text, preferably from Greek,
(2) a translation of the text that reflects the results of the exegesis including any significant translation and textual criticism issues,
(3) its literary context: including the coherence and boundaries of your passage, its immediate surrounding context, and how your passage fits into the broader framework of the argument of that particular book of the Bible given its overall purposes, occasion, and orientation,
(4) the historical, geographical, and cultural background of the passage,
(5) the lexical meaning of any important or unusual words in your passage, including any scriptural and/or cultural backgrounds that may have informed them,
(6) any complex, unusual or particularly important grammatical features of the passage (any grammatical diagrams may be attached as appendices),
(7) the semantic structure of the passage (any charts or diagrams may be attached as appendices),
(8) any implications of genre or literary form of the passage for understanding the passage and a discussion of any possible figures of speech,
(9) meaningful cross references and/or possible parallel passages, as well as other passages of Scripture using similar motifs,
(10) a sensitivity to the general flow of redemptive history and how this passage fits into our understanding of systematic theology.
(11) an understanding of the author’s exegetical idea and overall purpose,
(12) the relevance of the text in its original context and its relevance/application to the context(s) of people in your own ministry context.

The exegesis paper should also:
1. Be typed, double-spaced (except extended block quotations and footnotes), in font size 12 (size 10 is fine for footnotes), with pagination, one-inch margins, and footnotes.
2. Include a bibliography of all works cited; and give proper recognition to all sources of words or ideas found in the body of the paper. Read the material on plagiarism at the end of this syllabus in Section 6 Academic Policies on Plagiarism.
3. Conform to *The SBL Handbook of Style*, edited by Patrick H. Alexander et al. (Hendrickson, 1999) for footnotes, bibliographies, etc. Note: Titles of articles in journals are put in quotation marks, journal titles or abbreviations of same are italicized. Dictionary articles should cite author of the article and give the article title in quotes. Dictionary articles should be listed under the name of the author of the article, not under the name of the editor of the dictionary

4. Students will write a 3 page paper on the topic of the spiritual dimension of hermeneutics addressing some of the following questions:
   - How is interpreting the Bible different from interpreting any other book? Or in other words, what is special about the Bible?
   - How does your own spiritual status as the reader/interpreter impact how you understand the Bible?
   - Is it wrong to have distinctly Christian presuppositions in interpreting Scripture? Incorporate any insights gained from classes as well as any other readings. Due July 21.

5. GRADING

A. Grading standards for short “Weekly Paper” assignments:
These papers will normally be grade with a check mark indicating that the assignment has been satisfactorily completed. If the course professor feels that the assignment has been completed in a particularly exemplary manner, the grade may be given as a check-plus, and if the course professor feels that the assignment has been completed in a more marginal manner, the grade may be given as a check-minus (which is still considered a passing grade).

Work submitted more than one class late may be given a reduced grade.

**B. Grading standards for the Exegesis Paper and Spiritual Formation Paper:**

A Outstanding quality, unusual diligence and/or creativity. (You went the "second mile.")
B Good solid work, above average in diligence and creativity. (You made some extra effort.)
C Satisfactory, acceptable graduate-level work. (You met the basic requirements.)
D Minimal performance, passing, but marginal in quality. (You cut too many corners.)
F Inadequate work, not acceptable. (You didn't follow directions.)

Work not submitted by the due date indicated on the course schedule may be given a reduced grade up to a full grade point (unless other arrangements have been made with the course professor).

**C. Grading standards for the Reading Report:**

A = 90-100% of readings completed, B = 80-89%, C = 70-79%, D = 60-69%, F = < 59%.

**D. Final course grade:**

- “Weekly” exegetical assignments (8 papers @ 4%) 32%
- Spiritual formation paper 8%
- Exegetical paper 40%
- Reading report 20%

Unexcused tardiness or absence from class may be reflected in the final grade for the course.

**6. ACADEMIC POLICIES**

**A. Late work:**

In unusual circumstances, you may ask for grace for additional time for any of these assignments, provided you do so in writing (primarily so that I will have a record of it). This means you will need to contact me either by email or a written note that you hand me before or after class. Work substantially late may require an official extension through the registration office.

**B. Plagiarism**

All use of sources must be properly indicated. Read the document on GCTS’s policy on plagiarism see [http://www.gordonconwell.edu/sites/default/files/hamreg_plagiarism.pdf](http://www.gordonconwell.edu/sites/default/files/hamreg_plagiarism.pdf) carefully and remember that use of authors’ words is indicated with quotation marks and a
footnote and the use of their ideas, but not their words, is indicated with a footnote. For further information see [http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml).

### 7. COURSE SCHEDULE: TOPICS, LEARNING OBJECTIVES, ASSIGNMENTS, AND ASSESSMENTS

**Before class begins:**
- Begin reading the class texts to get a head start on the reading
- Begin thinking about a specific passage from the NT for your exegesis paper

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<th>Date</th>
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<td>9:00 AM</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>KBH: Pref, Intro, chaps. 1-2</td>
<td>Carson: Intro</td>
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<td>Fee, pp. xi-xix, 1-8, Step 2, pp. 9-10, 158</td>
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<td>Basic Presuppositions</td>
<td>KBH, chaps. 5-6</td>
<td>Fee, Step 3-3.2, pp. 10-11, 158</td>
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<td>The Spiritual Dimension of Hermeneutics</td>
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<td>Discerning the Proper Text</td>
<td>KBH, chap. 4 &amp; pp. 505-510</td>
<td>Fee, Step 3.3, pp. 11-12, Step 5, pp. 15, 59-70, 160-161</td>
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<td>Issues of Canon, Textual Criticism, and Translation Theory</td>
<td>Fee, Step 3.3, pp. 11-12, Step 5, pp. 15, 59-70, 160-161</td>
<td>Preface/Introduction to your favorite English translation</td>
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<td>Literary Context</td>
<td>KBH, pp. 213-240, 78-101, 517-518, 520-528, 534-543</td>
<td>Fee, Step 1, pp. 8-9, 158; Step 8, pp. 16, 96-111, 164-165, Step 13, pp. 32-35, 172-177</td>
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<td>Contextualization WRAP-UP</td>
<td>Spiritual Dimension Paper</td>
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A Comprehensive Methodology  
For Discerning the Proper Meaning and Contemporary Application  
Of a Passage of Scripture in Preparation for Preaching and Teaching  

Brian Labosier

Preparation (laying the foundation):

1. Prepare your heart so that you are open and receptive to God's Spirit.

2. Discern God's direction in selecting a specific text through prayer and a sensitivity to the spiritual needs around you.

3. Establish the proper limits of a passage of workable length that is both long enough to be meaningful, and yet focused and brief enough to be manageable.

Exegesis (focusing on a specific text in its proper context):

1. Observe the text. Read and re-read the passage, preferably in the original language, and also in multiple translations. Jot down observations for further exploration.

2. Determine the proper text by observing differences among major English translations and exploring any possible problems involving textual criticism.

3. Locate your passage in its proper literary context by observing both (1) its immediate context, and (2) the broader purposes and orientation of the book of the Bible, including considerations of authorship, dating, original audience, etc. that may be relevant to your text.

4. Research the historical, geographical, and cultural background through Bible dictionaries and other tools that may shed light on the meaning of the passage.

5. Research the meaning of key words through doing word studies.

6. Investigate key grammatical issues by checking with Greek reference grammars, and construct a sentence or grammatical diagram of at least key portions of the passage.

7. Discern the structure of the passage by noting conjunctions and other structural indicators and construct a semantic structural diagram of at least key portions of the passage.

8. Consider the implications of genre or literary form of the passage for understanding the passage and analyze any possible figures of speech.
9. **Double check your work** with commentaries and other secondary literature.

**Integration (seeing a text as one part of God's total self-revelation):**

1. **Explore cross-references**, possible parallel passages, or other passages using similar motifs, as well as any other material in Scripture that may also be related to the passage under study.

2. **Locate this passage in the broad sweep of redemptive history** through a sensitivity to both earlier and later material in Scripture.

3. **Reflect upon how this passage contributes to our understanding of the major doctrines in Scripture** especially our understanding of God and His ways.

**Application (bridging the gap to today’s world):**

1. **Summarize the basic theme** and major sub-points of the passage clearly and concisely.

2. **Identify the exact contemporary situation** to which these truths should be applied.

3. **Identify the specific responses** required by this passage in the lives of your hearers: changes in thoughts, attitudes, and/or behaviors.

4. **Consider the most effective way to communicate this message** to your particular audience.

For further information on exegetical methodology consult:


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