GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
NT 914 New Testament History
Spring 2014. Wednesdays & Fridays, 9:35 – 11:00 am.
Eckhard J. Schnabel. email: eschnabel@gcts.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION
A study of the origins and the growth of the early church in the context of the history and the
culture of the early Roman Empire, with particular attention to historical events, developments,
and personalities, including chronological questions, exegetical interpretation of key New
Testament and extra-biblical passages, and theological analyses of major trajectories.
The course is open to doctoral students.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
• Students will become familiar with the relevant historical sources, the basic critical issues,
and the historical developments in earliest Christianity between A.D. 30–70.
• Students will be able to consolidate their expertise in biblical research, focusing on historical
and exegetical issues in terms of a close reading of relevant texts.
• Students will expand their knowledge of both the Jewish and Greco-Roman world and the
history of the early church.
• Students will acquire a deepened awareness of the relevance of history for the church.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Students are expected to read the following texts:


   InterVarsity Press, 1999

   Dunn, James D. G. Jesus Remembered (Christianity in the Making I; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003
   Dunn, James D. G. Beginning from Jerusalem (Christianity in the Making II; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009)

2. Students will submit a review (2,000 words) which compares the treatment of a particular
historical issue in Conzelmann, Barnett, and Dunn (Paper I).

3. Students will write a summary (500 words) of the various proposals that have been made for
the “star of Bethlehem.” See attached bibliography and the commentaries (Paper II).

4. Students will write a short paper (2,000 words) on a particular chronological issue from the
life of Jesus; see attached bibliography (Paper III).

5. Students write a major paper (5,000 words) on one of the following topics. Each student will
distribute a one page summary of his or her research in class (Paper IV).
1. The Claudius edicts and their impact on the history of the church
2. The church in Jerusalem: A prosographical study
3. The death of Stephen: Historical and legal issues
4. Peter’s departure from Jerusalem: Facts, assumptions and questions
5. The Apostles’ Council: Historicity and Relevance
6. The beginnings of Paul’s independent missionary work in historical perspective
7. The proposal of a Pauline mission to northern Galatia
8. The social situation of wealthy Christians: The test case of Corinth
9. The establishment of the church in the city of Rome: Historical questions
10. The synagogues in the city of Rome in the first century
11. The death of Peter in the city of Rome: Archaeology and faith
12. The early churches and their meeting places: An historical investigation
13. The origins of christology: The meaning of Χριστός
14. The origins of christology: The worship of Jesus
15. The expectation of Jesus’ parousia in the early church

For due dates see Class Schedule.

Grading: Paper I 20%; Paper II 20%; Paper III 20%; Paper IV 40%.

1. Introduction: History and the study of history  
The sources: Christian texts, Jewish texts, Greco-Roman texts, non-literary texts
   New Testament Chronology II: The Birth of Jesus
   New Testament Chronology IV: Paul
4. Jesus and the Twelve  
The trial and death of Jesus
5. Stephen and the Hellenists in Jerusalem  
   Peter: Church leader in Jerusalem. The church in the city of Rome
6. The Twelve after A.D. 42  
The Apostle Thomas in India
7. Paul I: Conversion and the early years  
   Paul II: The significance of the church in Antioch
8. Paul III: Relations with Jerusalem  
   Paul IV: Missionary work in Asia Minor and in Greece
9. The Apostles’ Council I: History of research  
   The Apostles’ Council II: Analysis of Acts 15
10. The persecution of the church in the first century: The death of Peter and Paul  
    Church leaders and missionaries: James, Barnabas, John, Apollos, Priscilla  
    The church between A.D. 70 and 150. The literature of the early church
11. Class presentation of main paper
12. Class presentation of main paper
13. Class presentation of main paper
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

New Testament History: Introductory texts

Dunn, James D. G. *Beginning from Jerusalem*. Christianity in the Making II. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009

New Testament History: Selected Studies


Chronology


Humphreys, Colin J. “The Jewish Calendar, a Lunar Eclipse and the Date of Christ’s Crucifixion.” *TynB* 43 (1992) 331–351


Schwartz, Daniël R. *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity*. WUNT 60. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992


Wacholder, B. Z. “Biblical Chronology in the Hellenistic World Chronicles.” *HThR* 61 (1968) 451–481
Wacholder, B. Z. “The Calendar of Sabbatical Cycles during the Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Period.” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 44 (1973) 153–196

**Commentaries**

Carson, Don A. *Matthew.* EBC. 1984
France, R.T. *Matthew.* NICNT. 2007
Gundry, Robert H. *Matthew.* Eerdmans. 1982
Hagner, Donald A. *Matthew.* WBC. 1993/1995
Keener, Craig S. *Matthew.* Eerdmans. 1999
Osborne, Grant R. *Matthew.* ZECNT. 2010
Talbert, Charles H. *Matthew.* Paideia. 2010
Turner, David L. *Matthew.* BECNT. 2008

Boring, M. Eugene. *Mark.* NTL. 2006
Chilton, Bruce, Darrell Bock, and Daniel M. Gurtner, *Mark.* NTGJC. 2010
Evans, Craig A. *Mark 8:27–16:20.* WBC. 2001
France, R. T. *Mark.* NIGTC. 2002
Guelich, Robert A. *Mark 1:1–8:27.* WBC. 1989
Gundry, Robert H. *Mark.* Eerdmans. 1993
Lane, William L. *Mark.* NICNT. 1974
Mann, Christopher S. *Mark.* AB. 1986


Beasley–Murray, George R. *John.* WBC. 1987
Carson, Don A. *John.* IVP 1991
Haenchen, Ernst. *John.* Hermeneia 1984
Keener, Craig S. *John.* Hendrickson. 2003
Köstenberger, Andreas. *John.* BECNT. 2004
McHugh, John. *John 1–4.* ICC. 2009
Michaels, J. Ramsey. *John.* NICNT. 2010
Morris, Leon. *John.* NICNT. 1971
Bruce, F. F. *Acts*. NICNT. 1988