



Introduction to the Gospels

Michaelmas, Fall 2024

Dates: Sept 9 - Nov 16
Module(s): Bible (B7301)
Difficulty: Moderate
Instructor(s): Joshua Shaw (j.shaw@davenantinstitute.org)
Meeting Time: Thursday 6:00 PM CST/ 7:00 PM EST
Zoom Link: [Populi](#) > click My Courses tab > click course > click Conferences (left menu).

βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
Matthew 1:1

τολμητέον τοίνυν εἰπεῖν ἀπαρχὴν μὲν πασῶν γραφῶν εἶναι τὰ εὐαγγέλια...
Origen's *Commentary on John*

The Gospel in all its parts, by giving answers to finite questions already asked,
provides answers to a limitless future.
FJA Hort's *The Way, the Truth, the Life*

Course Description

(This is will be function as a Part I of a II-Part introduction to the New Testament)

The early church handed on us its judgment about the relative value of New Testament writings by subordinating the Acts and Epistles to the Gospels: The Gospels are man's greatest possession, and our ability to give a faithful witness about God, that he is light and in him is no darkness, corresponds to the clarity, completeness, and proportion of our vision of Jesus the Son of God presented therein. To move toward *that* is the final aim of the course.

D. A. Schlatter's *History of the Christ* and *Faith in the New Testament* will guide us toward grasping the New Testament on its own terms. As my reasons for choosing *this* author as our secondary guide and the goals for the course are the same, I will give them below.

1) His work, though the work of the highest scholarship, directs the reader not to his own musings nor to other works of scholarship nor to the various backgrounds of the New Testament, however interesting or helpful - instead, the author centers the whole of our attention on the New Testament itself; *seeing, seeing, seeing, always and ever seeing*: that was Schlatter's method. This is reflected by the fact that footnotes are few and names even fewer. It is likewise reflected in the fact that - at least the *History* - is rarely if ever burdened with original language notes; Schlatter had no need to parade his erudition or play the scholar's game. All this makes it more useful and more accessible to the layman.

2) *Nevertheless*, where important interpretations and judgements in the history of the church have some real or apparent anchor in the text, Schlatter expounds them and engages with them fully, whether that be of Origen, Augustine, Aquinas, or Bauer and the countless modern critics. The result is a book which, while it never (or hardly ever) mentions these authors by name, yet engages fairly with their arguments so far as their arguments rest on plausible observations. The history of modern criticism and the liberal conclusions arising out of it are especially evident. By letting these questions really be spoken and really heard and their real force felt, Schlatter teaches us the courage of the theologian, whose faith is in God and not in its system nor *his* strength to defend God. The *God-thought (Gottesgedanke)* as revealed by Scripture, in Nature, and through the Spirit guided all that Schlatter did.

In addition to guided discussions of Schlatter's work, and brief forays into the complexities of NT scholarship, I will also begin each week by giving short introductions to the history of the text of the New Testament and therefore also a number of the scholar's most important tools.

In all, I hope that every part of this course will contribute to a profound sense of the unity of the Gospels which rests on rather than denies their obvious diversity.

Objectives

1. Discern the relationship of Jesus to John the Baptist, the Pharisees, Zealots, Sadducees, Israel, and his Disciples
2. Grasp the nature and interrelation of Jesus's Christhood and his Sonship
3. Begin to appreciate the diversity and integrity of the theological thought of the individual Gospel writers
4. Gain a robust and many-sided grasp of Faith, the central process (*Vorgang*) in the New Testament
5. Get acquainted with the history of the text of the New Testament and some of the most helpful tools for studying it

Course Texts

- The Four Gospels - The student may use his/her own preferred translation, though NASB or ESV are highly recommended, as well as of course the Greek New Testament
 - Greek New Testaments:
 - [NA 28](#)
 - [USB 5](#)
 - [Reader's Greek NT](#)
- [*The History of the Christ*](#) by Adolf Schlatter
- [*Faith in the New Testament*](#) by Adolf Schlatter (or [here](#))

Bene Nota : The modern translator unfortunately used only the original edition, which is unusually rife with original language notes (primarily in the beginning) and lacks some great resources that later editions have. I will attempt to supply the students whether through report or translation with some of these resources. Additionally, if a student has "little Latine, and lesse Greeke", then they may choose to put their effort elsewhere when Greek and Hebrew abound (the Biblical text, commentaries, etc.).

Course Format

Class sessions will begin with about thirty minutes of formal lecture, but will proceed in a seminar-style. Readings will be 50–100 pages per week.

Course Delivery

Classroom Resources

- [Populi](#) online classrooms are used for all course content, including assignments, grades, announcements, course records, and more.
- [Zoom](#) links & recordings are provided on the Populi course page Conferences tab. Class sessions are two hours weekly (2.5 in summer) for ten weeks (8 weeks in summer) and recorded for absent students (not for dissemination outside of class).
- [Discord](#) may be used for additional student and instructor interaction as well as Davenant community discussions.

Attendance: Required for all students taking courses for credit. If the scheduled time does not work for a particular student, they may drop the course according to the Drop Policy in the Academic Catalog.

Auditors: No requirements, but may participate in all class activities.

Late work: Grade reduction of -5% per calendar day upon instructor discretion. No assignments will be accepted after the last due date without an approved extension.

Requirements

Attendance : 10 %

Weekly Course Participation: 20%

Reading questions will be sent each week to be completed together with the reading; sometimes specific, sometimes general in nature, they will improve understanding of the reading and provide excellent discussion fodder for the class.

The student will be required to share his/her answers to these questions with all course participants at least *one full hour* before the beginning of class. One running Google document with the several weeks demarcated will be the simplest way to do this. All (or at least most) of the questions will need to be answered *bona fide* for full credit.

Synthetic Essays: 30%

If the student has carefully read the texts with the aid of the reading question, answers to the following prompts will present themselves, though not, of course, without revision and reflection. *Begin as you mean to go*: from the first, you should begin gathering detailed observations of the biblical text, especially as it relates to the following questions.

Submission: Submit on Populi as .DOCX, .PDF, or Google Doc link.

- What or who was the Christ? **(Due week 5)**
- How did Jesus describe and display his Sonship? **(Due week 8)**
- What is Faith according to the Gospels? **(Due week 10)**

Instructions: Write 2-3 page (c. 750-1000 word) responses for each of the topics/works listed above. Present concrete observations. Don't say what you *will* say - you won't have time for that. Just say it. In your final sentence(s), after doing the hard work, say something suggestive or provocative.

As the aim of this course is introductory, it *must* be synthetic; this is to say, you will need to make broad conclusions to the best of your ability. Though you will doubtless adjust many arguments, add or subtract evidence, and modify your beliefs in subsequent study ("Whoever has lost the ability to unlearn has lost also the ability to learn"), yet even a tentative sense of the whole is necessary for an accurate perception of the various parts.

It is expected that the image your essay gives will embrace multiple Gospel writers without "confusing the persons nor dividing the essence." A complete synthesis of all four Gospel writers in these preliminary essays will be impossible, so cover two or three as space allows. You will be expected to add the third and/or fourth in the Oral Exam.

Oral Exam: 40%

Due: See Course Calendar (end of term).

Length: c. 15-25 Minutes

Sources: I hope to find the student well versed in the two secondary sources of the class (Schlatter's two works), but more importantly, to have amassed a bulk of observations of the Gospels on Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God and the nature of Faith in God through him. Schlatter is not to be treated as Gospel, but as a helpful tool in seeing for yourself.

There will be no surprises: the reading questions and especially the synthetic essays will provide the questions I ask in the Oral Exam. Odds are, we will end up focusing on one or two of them for the sake of depth. More than anything else, I earnestly hope this exam will show your own mature belief on these topics as informed by the course, that, in other words, this work will have intensely personal.

Instructions: The three Synthetic Essays should prepare you for this exam - I will expect you to have developed your thoughts further, of course, especially noting those areas where I pointed out deficiencies or incompleteness. The grade, then, will take as its point of departure your work in the three essays.

Due Date: We will arrange a meeting in the final week of the course for the following weeks.

Grading Scale:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
93	90	87	83	80	77	73	70	67	63	60	

Course Calendar

This reading is not easy, for which reason I have kept it well under the 100 p. limit; likewise, it is expected that students follow up biblical references, pause over difficulties, puzzle over Greek or Hebrew (if they have it), and answer the reading questions in good faith. If a student has little to no Greek or Hebrew, he/she is encourage to diligently read around the Greek/Hebrew at the beginning and to use the translations etc. as much as possible - there is still much to be gleaned even from the first chapters apart from linguistic knowledge.

Week	Dates	Key Topic	Primary Source Reading	Background Reading
1	September 9 - 15	A New Righteousness	Matthew 1-8	Schlatter's <i>History of the Christ</i> (HC): 9-41 (Pref. - I.6) <i>Faith in the New Testament</i> (FNT): Introduction
2	Sept 16-22	The Kingdom of Heaven	Matthew 9-18	HC: 42-72 (I.7-I.15) FNT: I.1 Faith in the Palestinian Synagogue
3	Sept 23-29	Judgment and the Cross	Matthew 19-28	HC: 73-112 (II) FNT: I.2 Faith in the Greek Synagogue
4	Sept 30-Oct. 6	The Gospel for the Greeks	Mark 1-8	HC: 113-162 (III.1-7) FNT: II.3 John the Baptist [to be supplemented]
5	Oct 7-13	The Christ Must Suffer and Die	Mark 9-16	HC: 163-216 (III.8-14) FNT: II.4 The Words of Jesus about Faith in the Synoptics
6	Oct 14-20	The Humanity of Jesus	Luke 1-9	HC: 217-262 (III.15-21) FNT: II.5 Faith in the Fourth Gospel
7	Oct 21-27	Luke's Special Source	Luke 10-24	HC: 263-303 (IV.1-8) FNT: II.6 Collocating the Two Accounts

8	Oct 28-Nov 3	The Word Became Flesh	John 1-4	HC: 304-334 (IV.9-14) FNT: III.1 The Posture of faith in the Apostolic Church
9	Nov 4-10	The Resurrection and the Life	John 5-13	HC: 335-374 (IV.15-21) FNT: <i>*Akiba's Faith*</i>
10	Nov 11-16	The Way, the Truth, an the Life	John 14-22	HC: 375-389 (V)

Institutional Policies

Drop Policy

The policies below apply to changes made after the registration deadline two weeks prior to term. To change registration before the term starts, please log on to Populi. To change registration after the term starts, email the registrar at registrar@davenantinstitute.org. See the Academic Calendar section for exact dates.

Drop Date (100% Refund): Before the term starts, students may drop with a 100% tuition refund. Registration fee is non-refundable.

Drop Date (50% Refund): Within the first two weeks of a term, students may drop the course with a 50% tuition refund. Registration fee is non-refundable. To drop, please email the registrar.

Withdrawal: Within weeks three and four of a term, students who drop a course will receive no refund and will earn a “W” on their transcript. Students cannot drop after this time will receive a letter grade. To drop, please email the registrar.

Attendance & Class Meeting Time Scheduling

Attendance is required for all students taking courses for credit. Most classes are scheduled for evenings or weekends, especially core classes. If the scheduled time does not work for a particular student, they may drop the course according to the Drop policy.

Extension Policy

All coursework and exams must be submitted no later than two weeks after the term end date. Before that time, homework extensions are at the discretion of the instructor. If a student requires more time, the student may submit a formal extension request by emailing the registrar at registrar@davenantinstitute.org. If approved, an extension will be granted to the student for a specific period of time agreed upon by the student and instructor. Extension requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will generally be granted for medical and family emergencies only.

Minimum Grade Requirement for Degree Students

Students enrolled in one of our degrees must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 (B average). If the students' GPA falls below 3.0, Davenant will initiate conversation with the student to judge whether the student is ready for their program. If the student earns a grade lower than a “C” (2.0) on a course required for their degree, they must retake the course in order to graduate. Their new grade will replace their former grade. If a degree student earns a grade lower than a “C” (2.0) on an elective, they are not required to retake the course, but they may request to retake the course or a close equivalent as a substitute for their former grade.

Grading Scale

Passing: ≥93:A • ≥90:A– • ≥87:B+ • ≥83:B • ≥80:B– • ≥77:C • ≥73:C

Retake if Core: 70–72:C– • ≥67:D+ • ≥63:D • ≥60:D– • <60:F.

For a complete list of policies, see the Academic Catalog at davenanthall.com