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## NT 520 Introduction to the New Testament

Michael McKeever

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## **NT520 New Testament**

Asbury Theological Seminary

Fall 2008

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*During the course, please use the To Professor icon for all private correspondence*

Online Office Hours: MF 3:30-5:00

### **Welcome**

Greetings. Welcome to NT520. I look forward to sharing with you our exploration of the New Testament. Take some time to get familiar with our syllabus and the layout of our course. After familiarizing yourself with the course, please share some information about yourself by updating your profile as part of the first assignment (click on your name and then “Edit Profile”). In a traditional class setting, I always pass out a student survey on the first day and then ask each student to share a few categories that help us to get to know them better. This first exercise will give you the opportunity to share in this fashion with the rest of the class in your profile.

### **About Me**

I am currently Professor of Biblical Studies at Judson College in Elgin Illinois, just outside Chicago. My wife, Karen, and I have two children, Madeline, age thirteen, and Aidan, age ten. Prior to teaching at Judson College, I taught at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, Fresno Pacific University and the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, California, as well as various seminaries in the San Francisco Bay area. I did my Ph.D. in New Testament at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley and wrote my dissertation in the area of Luke-Acts under the direction of Joel Green. I was also associated with Wycliffe Bible Translators for a time and this led to getting Masters in Linguistics as well.

I “cut my teeth” in terms of New Testament introduction teaching this course at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley when I was Joel Green’s Graduate Assistant in the early 90’s. Since then I have taught this course numerous times in both seminary and undergraduate contexts. The method and structure of that first class has largely shaped how I approach this course, particularly since the publication of Achtmeyer, Green and Thompson’s *Introducing the New Testament* in 2001.

Nevertheless, teaching this course online has its own special character and I genuinely look forward to the kind of interactions we can have in this format. I believe that we can create a great learning environment in this course. I am sure

we will all make some mistakes along the way and there will be adjustments that we might make to the class, just as there might be in a traditional classroom. So let us strive to create a learning environment that is characterized by graciousness and patience as we seek to master this technology and tap its wonderful potential.

### **Contacting the Professor and Office Hours**

**Email:** Please post general questions in Course Questions. Just as in a traditional classroom, it often benefits the entire class to hear and interact with the answer to these questions. When you need to send personal messages, send them to me by clicking on the To Professor link. I am the only one who will view these materials. If you have an urgent matter, please flag your post with the word "Urgent" in the subject line.

**Telephone:** 847.628.1054 (work) or 847.697.8783 (home)

**Office Hours:** I will typically be checking in and working on the course for a period sometime each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. I will respond to correspondence in the order in which it was received. In reviewing class discussions and postings, I will read all of the entries which are posted, but I will respond to a portion of the posts based on central themes for that week and pertinence to the discussion. If the need arises, we can also arrange time to speak via telephone. Just let me know if you would like to set that up and when you might be available for questions and/or conversation.

### **Course Description**

An introduction to (1) the literature of the New Testament in its socio-historical, literary and canonical contexts; and (2) critical study of the New Testament.

### **Course Objectives**

Having completed this course, students should be able:

- (1) to articulate how one's beliefs about Scripture impinge on how one engages biblical texts in interpretation;
- (2) to identify a range of questions (e.g., historical, literary, canonical) that might be addressed to particular New Testament texts and explore those questions in the process of interpreting particular New Testament texts;
- (3) to identify significant, critical resources for New Testament study and deploy those sources critically in New Testament study;
- (4) to probe the interplay of theology and ethics in the various New Testament writers;
- (5) to demonstrate awareness of the significance of the original languages for understanding and interpreting the New Testament; and

(6) to integrate these concerns and methodologies in a sound hermeneutical method.

### **ONLINE SECTION DESCRIPTIONS AND COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES**

The Virtual Classroom is built upon the open-source Moodle platform. By logging into <http://virtual.asburyseminary.edu> you will have access to this course and be able to collaborate with participant-colleagues and me throughout the course. The following are functions with which you should familiarize yourself:

1. The Course Information Center, in the center of your screen, contains many features to be used throughout the semester, including:
  - a) Course News and Announcements, where I will post items important for the entire class;
  - b) Syllabus, where a copy of the syllabus is provided;
  - c) To Professor, which is a way for you to post a message directly to me and we can discuss an issue privately;
  - d) Course Questions, which is a public forum where you can publicly post any questions you have regarding the course so others may see your message and respond. Anytime you have a question or comment about the course, the schedule, the assignments, or anything else that may be of interest to other participants and me you should post it to the Course Questions Forum;
  - e) Prayer Forum, which is a public forum where you can post prayer concerns and praises for all to see. This is a way for us to build community;
  - f) Open Forum, which is a public forum where you can post anything that is not course-related for all to see. Examples include someone getting married, an upcoming birthday, discussions on topics not course-related, etc. This is a way for us to build community.
2. Modules, which are located below the Course Information Center, will contain forums where group discussions will take place, documents or other files to download or view online, and assignment links where you will post your assignments to me. Modules will be clearly labeled so you can follow along during the semester.
3. Resources, a section located on the left side, provides links to items you will want to use often in the semester.

## **Expectations:**

### **What you can expect of me:**

1. Prompt replies to your questions and postings. Typically, this should be by the end of the next day I have scheduled online office hours.
2. Interaction, participation, and direction in the ongoing discussions that will occur over the course of the semester.
3. Timely and substantive feedback on your assignments. For example, when one assignment builds on a previous assignment, you will have received back the first assignment before the second is due. I will strive to make my comments substantive by affirming what you have done well and underscoring areas for improvement.
4. Occasional mistakes in that I am still adjusting to this mode of teaching and means of interacting.
5. My genuine enthusiasm for this material and my excitement about what we will be learning.

### **What I can expect of you:**

1. Active and engaged participation in our online discussions, as a class and in groups.
2. Timely completion of assignments.
3. Your honest questions when you do not understand the material or the instructions.
4. Your patience as we work together in this medium.
5. Your willingness to engage in material that may stretch and challenge you.
6. Your willingness to entertain and engage different perspectives on their own terms in a non-dismissive manner.

### **What to expect from this course:**

This course offers a basic introduction to the history, culture and content of the New Testament. We will focus on how the message of the New Testament was shaped, influenced, and heard within its original cultural and historical contexts and we will grapple with the interplay of culture, theology, and ethics.

As a survey of the New Testament, this course rapidly covers a lot of ground. In addition to reading the New Testament in its entirety, there will be a good deal of required reading, particularly early on in the course. No doubt, the nature of this reading will stretch you, both in terms of the amount covered and in terms of the challenging ideas and information in the works themselves. Nevertheless, this reading will lay a vital foundation for much of our class discussion and “hands on” interpretive work. Please make a commitment to set aside ample time to stay on schedule with your reading. I would also suggest picking up a copy of Patzia and Petrotta’s *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies*, listed in our recommended

bibliography, to help you with any unfamiliar terms or concepts encountered in your reading.

### **Course Guidelines:**

**Postings:** Postings in forums should strive for substantive engagement without being excessive. As a rule of thumb, your postings should fall in the range of 50 to 75 words. Postings should be at least 50 words in length. Each week's assignments run from 9:00 a.m. Monday to 9:00 a.m. on the following Monday. (All times listed in this course are Eastern Standard Time.) In a typical week you should read the session readings and as well as the initial question to get things started. These will always be available to the class by 9:00 Monday morning, but often before if you need to work ahead. You will need to post one substantive response to my initial question/assignment for that week and two substantive responses to your classmate's postings for that week. You must post your initial response to my question/assignment by 9:00 a.m. Friday. All students are expected to read ALL the initial posts of the class. Watch the discussion as it unfolds and then jump in again at some point with your responses. Substantial responses will demonstrate some critical reflection and content in relation to the question or posting being addressed. Hence, three postings per module is just the MINIMUM requirement to fulfill this part of the course. Additional postings are always welcomed and encouraged.

When you reply to a colleague's message, please click "Reply" within his/her post. It will subordinate your reply to the one you are answering, making it possible to read the discussion in sequence.

**Grammar and English Usage:** Proper English grammar should be used at all times. Please always incorporate complete sentences, punctuation, capitalization, and correct spelling. Poor grammar will be reflected in the final grade. Granted, communication in the forums will certainly be more conversational and spontaneous. Nevertheless, we should aim for clarity and precision in all of our communication. This is particularly important given the constraints of online communication.

**Discussion:** A crucial element of this course is the dialogue that we enter into with each other. All discussions are to be in the vein of encouragement, gentleness, patience, persistence, and hope. This does not mean that we will not challenge, confront, or question each other. It does mean that these things will be undertaken for the purpose of growth and stimulation to think and understand the subject at hand more deeply and more intimately.

### **Course Requirements:**

The assignments in this course are meant both to introduce you to foundational concepts and skills and to build toward integration in your final research paper.

That is, we will develop interpretive skills for engaging our primary text, the New Testament, and critical skills for engaging secondary literature, our course texts. These will both be integrated in our final research assignment that will incorporate both of these skills.

**Preparation and Participation:** Students should prepare for each module by completing all biblical and other readings and actively participating in group discussions and/or group assignments. Your participation grade will be based upon *quality* of participation in online discussions, and evidence of appropriate preparation. Your comments should give evidence of careful thought about the topic of discussion or question posed and careful reading of class sources.

*Quantity* of interaction will only prove relevant in terms of the *depth* of your treatment of the topic. Quantity just for quantity's sake or at the expense of quality should be avoided. In short, think through the issue and think about what others—your professor, your classmates and other authors—have said about the subject.

In my own assessment, I will attend to the following: Have you posted the minimum three postings per assignment? How many total postings did you make per module? How many were significant and substantive postings? How well did you respond when questions were posed to you by the professor or other students? Did your postings show evidence of interacting with course readings? (20%)

**Critical Book Review:** Each student will write a critical book review on a book from our reading list besides *Introducing the New Testament*. This book review will be due **10/20 at 9 a.m.** Reviews should be 1,000-1,250 words in length (4-5 pages), typed, and double-spaced. These will be submitted to the appropriate assignment link. Please follow the guidelines for writing critical book reviews posted in the course. (20%)

**Small Group Interpretive Assignments:** For three of the eight Interpretive Assignment passages (see Course Outline beginning Week 6) students will work in groups of 3-5 to prepare an Interpretive Assignment consisting of informal observations based upon a close reading of a specific New Testament passage. Each close reading should be around 1,000 words (1-2 pages, single-spaced type). Your observations should always be supported by reference to the passage under consideration and your work should be carefully written with attention to grammar and spelling. However, these essays are *not* intended to be research assignments. Hence, consultation of secondary materials is not allowed. Nor are they intended to be *application papers* or *sermons*. Rather, they should give evidence of a close reading of the assigned New Testament text, attending to literary form and structure, with sensitivity to social, cultural, historical and theological issues.

Beginning on Week 6 you will have opportunity each week to tackle one of your three Interpretive Assignment passages. (See the syllabus for the particular text we will be looking at that week.) I will be posting a sign-up sheet for each passage to facilitate your collaboration with 2-3 other classmates on this assignment. One of these passages will then become the focus of your final research paper. Therefore, I would suggest you look over the passages we will be tackling this semester to find three passages you may wish to work on.

These assignments will be due and should be by 9 a.m. on Friday of the week we cover that particular passage. Since all of the class will be discussing the assigned text, Interpretive Assignments will never be accepted late (i.e., after discussion of the passage has already taken place). If you do not have these assignments in by Friday morning of the relevant week, then you will have to choose a different assigned passage later. Remember, you have at least eight opportunities to complete the necessary three assignments.

When submitting Interpretive Assignments, please post them in the appropriate forum. It is always valuable to the class when they can see the work of their fellow students, especially since we will all be interacting over the same passage that week to varying degrees, even if we do not choose to do an Interpretive Assignment on that particular passage. It will greatly facilitate the interaction with your fellow students and simplify my own feedback if you can remember to paste your comments into a post rather than attach it as a separate document, even if you compose it on your own word processor. I would also encourage you to do one of the first few assignments so that I can begin to give you feedback early on. Please follow the handouts and guidelines for writing interpretive assignments as posted in the course. (3 x 10% = 30%).

**Final Research Paper:** This will be a 2500-3000 word (10-12 pages) research paper typed, double-spaced, with appropriate notes and bibliography, presenting an interpretation of a New Testament passage chosen from among your interpretive assignments. This essay should exhibit *both* a close reading of the NT text(s) selected for study (as in the Interpretive Assignments, above) *and* critical engagement with fellow interpreters of the NT (as in the Critical Review Assignments, above--e.g., commentaries, special studies, articles).

For research papers, you need to work with “essential” and “critical” commentaries, rather than “homiletical” or “devotional” commentaries.

- A **critical commentary** works with the biblical text in the original language(s), provides full notes and bibliography for further reading, and is in ongoing dialogue with alternative viewpoints.
- An **essential commentary** is usually more accessible than the “critical” commentary, and is often more selective and strategic with regard to the

sort of technical issues it will discuss in detail; these commentaries also tend to require less knowledge of the biblical languages.

For research papers, you should draw from these two categories of commentary, critical and essential. **Commentary series that would be included** here would include the following:

Anchor Bible  
Baker's Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament  
Hermeneia  
International Critical Commentary  
New Century Bible  
New International Biblical Commentary  
New International Commentary on the New Testament  
New International Greek Testament Commentary  
Sacra Pagina  
Word Biblical Commentary

**Commentary series that would not be included** (that is, that should not serve as major sources for research papers) would include the following:

Daily Study Bible (William Barclay)  
InterVarsity Press New Testament Commentary  
New International Version Application Commentary

Please see the Research Papers handout for detailed instructions.

The appropriate number of sources for such a paper is the amount needed to cover adequately your chosen topic. However, as a general guideline, I would suggest you include at least 10 graduate level sources beyond our course texts, including 1 Book, 2 Encyclopedia or Dictionary Articles, 2 Journal Articles and only scholarly Internet Sources. For internet sources to be of a scholarly nature, it should represent an online version of material that is also published in printed media such as the sources above, i.e., books, encyclopedias, dictionaries or journals. Please read the handout on Students are encouraged to discuss their projects beforehand with the instructor and to peruse other bibliographical tools for relevant secondary literature. **Papers are due by midnight 12/11.** (30%)

On questions of style, especially with regard to paper organization and references, see Carole Slade, *Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports, Theses* (10th ed.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

Please keep a copy of all of your assignments until your final grade is issued.

**Grading:**

Asbury Seminary defines grades using the following criteria (catalog, p. 24):

A= Exceptional work: outstanding or surpassing achievement of course objectives

B= Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives

C= Acceptable work: essential achievement of course objectives

D= Marginal work: minimal or inadequate achievement of course objectives

F= Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives

A plus (+) or minus (–) indicates positions between categories (for example, B+ = very good; C– = slightly below acceptable, etc.).

Incompletes: “A grade of ‘I’ denotes that the work of a course has not been completed due to an unavoidable emergency, which does not include delinquency or attending to church work or other employment” (*Catalog*, 29). I know that all of us feel overworked and face a variety time related pressures, but please note that this policy is strictly adhered to. Plan accordingly.

### **Specific Grading Policies for NT520:**

1. If you should complete more than three Interpretive Assignments, I will assign your grade based upon your top three assignments. However, Interpretive Assignments will not be accepted late.
2. Other late papers will not receive written comments and will be marked down 1/3 of a letter grade per day late. For example, a “B” paper will become a “B-“ if a day late.
3. Poor grammar and spelling will have an effect on your final grade.

### **Required Reading:**

A modern translation of the Bible, preferably the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), Revised Standard Version (RSV), or New American Standard Bible (NASB).

Achtemeier, Paul J., Joel B. Green, and Marianne Meye Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Message*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 2001.

deSilva, David A. *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2000.

Green, Joel B., ed. *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 1995.

Theissen, Gerd. *The Shadow of the Galilean*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1987.

Jeffers, James. *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1999.

### **Recommended Reading:**

Camery-Hoggart, Jerry. *Speaking of God: Reading and Preaching the Word of God*. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1995.

Gonzalez, Justo L. *Santa Biblia: The Bible through Hispanic Eyes*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.

## Recommended Reference Works:

- Arthur G. Patzia and Anthony J. Petrotta, *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002. *I would highly recommend this for concise definitions of unfamiliar terms you may encounter in your required course readings.*
- Green, Joel B., and Scot McKnight, eds. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1992.
- Martin, Ralph P., Gerald Hawthorne, and Daniel G. Reid, eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1993.
- Martin, Ralph P., and Peter H. Davids, eds. *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1997.
- Evans, Craig A., and Stanley E. Porter, eds. *Dictionary of New Testament Background*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2000.
- Freedman, David N., ed. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.

*All of the above are also available in the Logos Library System accessible through Prolepsis on FirstClass.*

## Course Schedule:

### THE WORLD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

- 9/2-8            The World of the New Testament (1).  
Assignment: *Introducing the New Testament* (hereafter *INT*), ch. 1; Begin reading deSilva.
- 9/8-15           The World of the New Testament (2).  
Assignment: *INT*, ch. 2; Finish reading deSilva; Begin reading Green.

### MODELS AND METHODS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

- 9/15-22           Models for Understanding the World of the New Testament.  
Assignment: *INT*, ch. 25; Continue reading Green.
- 9/22-29           Methods for Understanding the World of the New Testament.  
Finish reading Green; Begin reading Theissen.

### JESUS AND THE GOSPELS

- 9/29-10/6        The Gospel Writers as Interpreters of Jesus.

Assignment: *INT*, chs. 3, 4; Finish reading Theissen.  
New Testament Reading: Matthew

10/6-13 Jesus and the Kingdom of God.  
Assignment: *INT*, chs. 5, 8  
New Testament Reading: Mark  
Interpretive Assignment: Mark 1:1-15.

10/13-20 Luke-Acts.  
Assignment: *INT*, chs. 6, 9; Begin reading Jeffers.  
New Testament Reading: Luke & Acts  
Interpretive Assignment: Luke 19:1-10.  
**Critical Book Review: Due 10/20 9 a.m.**

10/20-27 The Gospel and Letters of John  
Assignment: *INT*, ch. 7, 23; Continue reading Jeffers  
New Testament Reading: John, 1-3 John  
Interpretive Assignment: John 9:1-41.

### **PAUL AND HIS LETTERS**

10/27-11/3 Paul and the Ministry of Reconciliation.  
Assignment: *INT*, chs. 10, 11, 12 (and 17 on Philemon); Finish reading Jeffers.  
New Testament Reading: Romans, Philemon  
Interpretive Assignment: Philemon.

11/3-10 The Corinthian Correspondence.  
Assignment: *INT*, chs. 13-16  
New Testament Reading: 1-2 Corinthians,  
Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians.  
Interpretive Assignment: 1 Cor 11:17-34.

11/10-17 The "Pastoral" Epistles.  
Assignment: *INT*, chs. 17-19  
New Testament Reading: Colossians,  
1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus  
Interpretive Assignment: 1 Tim 2:9-15.

### **LATER NEW TESTAMENT FAITH**

11/17-24 James and Peter  
Assignment: *INT*, chs. 20-22  
New Testament Reading: Hebrews, James 1 Peter  
Interpretive Assignment 7: James 4:13-5:6.

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>11/24-12/1</b> | <b>READING WEEK / GIVE THANKS</b>  |
| 12/1-8            | Revelation<br>Assignment: <i>INT</i> , chs. 23, 24, 25<br>New Testament Reading: 2 Peter, Jude, Revelation<br>Interpretive Assignment 8: Revelation 5. |
| 12/11             | Semester Ends: <b>Final Paper: Due by Midnight</b>   |

## ExL Support Contact Information

For **general questions and administrative assistance regarding the ExL program**, contact Dale Hale: [ExL\\_Office@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:ExL_Office@asburyseminary.edu) Phone: (859) 858-2393

For **technical support, library research support, library loans, and ExL media** contact Information Commons: [Info\\_Commons@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:Info_Commons@asburyseminary.edu) Phone: (859) 858-2233; Toll-free: (866) 454-2733

## Accessing Information Commons Materials

### 1. General Questions:

a. The Information Commons is a "one-stop shop" for all student research, circulation and technical needs. The Information Commons hours are posted here: <http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/hours.htm>

### 2. Materials Requests:

a. To search the library catalog for available materials, click here: <http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/index.htm>

b. ExL Students may request books, photocopies or emailed attachments of journal articles/portions of reference books from Asbury Seminary's Library. Please allow 3-10 business days for all requests to be filled. Contact the Information Commons for costs and instructions on how to make requests.

c. ExL students are encouraged to make use of local library resources. Students who live within a 50-mile radius of either the Florida or the Kentucky campus should come to campus to obtain their materials.

### 3. Research Questions:

a. ExL students are encouraged to contact the Information Commons for research assistance including help determining the best sources to use for a paper, finding book reviews, or research questions about using the online databases or any other library materials.

#### 4. Online Databases:

a. To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-text journal databases, go to <http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/index.htm> and enter your 10-digit student ID# number in the login box. Your student ID# is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0's to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000XXXXX where XXXXX = your student id).

### **Copyright Policies**

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No further reproduction and distribution of [media for this course] is permitted by transmission or any other means.

"The development of this extended learning syllabus is intended for distribution to members of the course and others by my permission. It is not intended for general distribution on the internet. Permission to copy, in whole or in part, must be requested from the professor (Michael McKeever).

Presentation on theme: "NT520 New Testament Introduction Sessions 3-4 Approaches to Understanding the New Testament: Models and Methods." Presentation transcript: 1 NT520 New Testament Introduction Sessions 3-4 Approaches to Understanding the New Testament: Models and Methods. CHAPTER 2: INTRODUCTION TO SACRED SCRIPTURE Bible as an inspirational collection of writings, the written record of God's Revelation What does it mean. "God and his word" part I: the inspiration and the authority of the bible. Catholics and the Bible An Exchange with Father Sean Charles Martin Associate Professor of Biblical Studies Aquinas Institute of Theology Saint Louis This is the New Testament introduction of all New Testament introductions! Not only is this a superb New Testament introduction from the keyboards of two of today's most prolific and balanced New Testament scholars, but more advanced students will find here an accessible and mature synthesis of and primer for N. T. Wright's voluminous work. - - CRAIG S. KEENER, F. M. and Ada Thompson Professor of Biblical Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky, USA. It's NT Wright for Dummies mashed with a NT Introduction in a near cubic hardcover. It looks targeted at a first-year NT course. I'm sure they'll sell a million of these as textbooks. The New Testament books were seen as appropriate, logical, natural supplements to, and fulfillments of the Hebrew Scriptures. 3. An Introduction to the Canon and Text of the New Testament 33. 3. What about those writings that were left out? 3. An Introduction to the Canon and Text of the New Testament 41. A. The traditional explanation: familiarity with the Synoptics Because John was the last and latest to be written, he did not want to repeat what had already appeared in the Synoptics. B. The modern explanation: unfamiliarity with the Synoptics Assumption that John was so different from the Synoptics was not because he knew them and chose to go in a different direction, but because he did not know them or at least he was not relying on their contents and their wording. The New Testament consists of 27 separate books, written mainly, though not exclusively, by Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. These books teach and testify of the ministry and Atonement of Jesus Christ and the rise of the early Christian Church. The Bible "the Old and New Testaments" has influenced more people than any other book ever written. Elder L. Tom Perry (1922-2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated that the New Testament "is the centerpiece of scriptural history, just as the Savior Himself should be the centerpiece of our lives. We must commit ourselves to study it and treasure it. The New Testament is a rich tapestry of people, culture, history, and theology. In its pages, we meet real people with real joys and sorrows. We meet a Messiah who loves the human race so much that he gives his life for it. We encounter God, not as a distant, uninterested spirit, but as one who is intimately involved in the affairs and lives of human beings." One of the goals of this course is to provide the student with the context of the New Testament, because a knowledge of its context enriches our understanding and appreciation of it. This statement is not as simple as it looks at first glance. The immediate context of a verse is the passage in which the verse is located, which of course will tell you a lot about what the verse is saying.