



NT Survey: Gospels/Life of Christ

Syllabus

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Course Description

The most compelling and important story in history is the story of Christ. In this course, learners complete a chronological and synthetic study of the Gospels' accounts of Christ's birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. The course focuses on the time, place, circumstances, and people involved in the events of our Lord's ministry. From the Incarnation to the Ascension, students will grasp a fuller understanding of Christ's words and works, especially in light of Old Testament prophecy and cultural context. The goal of the course is that Christ will impact learners' lives as He did those first generation followers, leading them to worship and serve Him as they minister to others.

Course Objectives

On completion of the course, you should be able to:

1. Trace the events and statements involved in Jesus' life in a logical and chronological sequence, demonstrating their development and purpose.
2. Discern the significance of the words and works of Jesus Christ (to the extent considered in the course lectures).
3. Explain the present implications of selected basic truths taught and demonstrated by Jesus Christ during his ministry on earth.
4. Identify at least two attitudinal and/or behavioral changes made or mandated in your life as a result of increased understanding of the life and work of Christ.

Course Approach

The Reporter/Analyst Approach is emphasized in the course. For each event in the life of Christ, seek to answer the following questions:

- **WHO** is involved in the event? Who is spoken to or about? Who is the audience? In what way is this person/audience significant?
- **WHAT** is said? What is taking place? What is the key concept taught and/or the basic action accomplished? In what way is this event significant?
- **WHERE** does the action occur? In the open? A town? A building? In what part of the country? What are the surroundings? In what way is the location significant?



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- **WHEN** does the action occur? At what time of the year? At what time in the religious calendar and in the sequence in Christ's ministry? In what way does the time affect the importance of the statement and/or action?
- **WHY** is the teaching or action significant in the ministry of Christ? Seek to determine the implications of the circumstances of the event (who-what-where-why?) What implications are involved for Jesus' contemporaries and for us?

Course Texts

Required

Harrison, Everett. F. *A Short Life of Christ*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968.

Thomas, Robert L. and Gundry, Stanley N. *A Harmony of the Gospels. (New American Standard Version)*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1986.

Recommended

Beitzel, Barry J. *The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1985.

Hoehner, Harold W. *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Whether you sit in a traditional classroom or study from a distance, you will benefit from interaction, collaboration, and spiritual formation (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 10.3.3.3; 10.3.4.3). In order to meet this need in distance theological education, ITS is developing structures and resources to encourage spiritual formation and community interaction in our courses. In this course, we have included three collaborative learning features:

1. [ITS Online Interactivity Forum](#) (see course requirements) - fosters peer-to-peer interaction in a global, threaded discussion (required for all students)
2. [Spiritual Formation Project](#) (see course requirements) - fosters mentor-to-learner interaction in a mentor-guided reflection, discussion and application (required for all students)
3. [Learning Community Assignments](#) (see end of syllabus) - fosters peer-to-peer collaboration in a group approach to assignments (optional but recommended where possible)

Go to www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/ for the most up-to-date ITS resources.



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Course Requirements

1. Basic Procedure

- a. Begin each lesson with prayer, committing yourself to being open to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life during the course. Any study of the Bible is meant to change our lives! Ask the Lord for insight into how the message of the Gospels should impact your life, your relationships, and your ministry.
- b. Follow the instructions for completing each lesson, which are located in the introductory section of the Learning Guide. Complete all **Pre-Tape Preparation** activities before beginning a taped lecture. These activities provide an excellent context for your listening, allowing you to integrate the information provided through the lectures and reading assignments.
- c. Listen to each taped lecture carefully, perhaps more than once. Have your *Harmony* and any pertinent parts of the Learning Guide easily accessible throughout the lecture. Take notes in a separate notebook.
- d. Answer the **Post-Tape Questions** immediately after completing the tape. The questions will serve as a review of the major points in each lecture and will direct you toward personal application of these points.

2. Specific Assignments: Reading

- a. **Scripture:** Read the *Harmony* sections listed for each lecture before you listen to the tape. You may scan sections, which repeat content you have read thoroughly in one Gospel record, but be alert for differences in the accounts.
- b. **Harrison:** Read the pages listed for each lecture before you listen to the tape. Although only 100 pages are required from this book, you will benefit from reading the entire book.
- c. **Learning Guide:** Read and study the information in Sections A through F of the Learning Guide as required.

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3. Specific Assignments: Written

- a. **Post-Tape Questions:** Located in the Introduction to the Learning Guide (pages Intro-1 to Intro-24), these questions cover highlights of the information presented in the lecture, Learning Guide sections, and in Harrison. Use them as an opportunity to review the notes you took for a particular lecture and the accompanying Learning Guide sections. This procedure will increase your retention of course content and help you on the exams.

INSTRUCTIONS: Post-Tape Questions

- ♦ Generally, one page per set of questions. Your answers should never exceed two pages.
- ♦ Typewritten, single-spaced.

- b. **Background Reports:** Complete eight research projects on people, groups, and institutions related to Christ to increase your understanding of the political, social, cultural, and religious milieu of the time. (See also the details instructions on the next page.)

REPORTS

1. Galileans

2. Samaritans

3. Pharisees

4. Sadducees

ITEMS TO INVESTIGATE

Respond to these items for the Galileans and Samaritans:

- Identity (Who were they?)
- Historical development (How did they come to be?)
- Reaction to Christ (How did they respond to Him?)

Respond to these items for the Pharisees and Sadducees:

- Identity (Who were they?)
- Doctrinal/political beliefs (What was important to them?)
- Response to Christ (How did they perceive and respond to Him? Why?)

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REPORTS

5. Temple

6. Synagogue

7. Scribes/Lawyers

8. Priests

ITEMS TO INVESTIGATE

Respond to these items for the Temple and Synagogue:

- Historical development (after 200BC)
- Function and importance in the time of Christ
- Significance in the ministry of Christ

Respond to these items for the Scribes/Lawyers and the Priests:

- Historical development (after 200BC)
- Function in Judaism at the time of Christ

INSTRUCTIONS: Background Reports

- ◆ **Length** = at least 300 and not more than 600 words for each group, sect, etc.
- ◆ **Typewritten, single-spaced**
- ◆ **Format** = Expanded outline (sentences, not paragraphs), listing basic facts under the headings above, e.g., "Identity," "Historical Development," etc.
- ◆ **Style** = Be concise, yet include as much information as possible (including Scripture references) for your future use.
- ◆ **Bibliography** = List your sources (including author, title, and page numbers) at the end of each report.
- ◆ **Resources** (full citations are in the Bibliography)

Green, McKnight, Marshall (eds.): *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*

Tenney (ed.): *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*

Jeremias: *Jerusalem in the Times of Jesus*

Schurer: *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*

Edersheim: *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*

Scott: *Customs and Controversies: Intertestamental Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*

Tenney: *New Testament Times and New Testament Survey*

◆ Research procedure

1. Locate these standard works for your research. They should be available in any theological library; some may also be available in public libraries. Consult several sources for each report if possible.
2. Gather information that addresses the questions posed for each group (see previous page) and write the report according to the directions above.



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- c. **5W Eyewitness Report:** Describe an event in the life of Christ as a news report.

INSTRUCTIONS: 5W Eyewitness Reports

Selection of topic

- ♦ Select an event from the *Harmony* sections 39, 73, 94, or 152.

Style, Length

- ♦ Emphasize your personal *observation of the scene* and the *significance of the event* in the life and ministry of Christ.
- ♦ Answer the 5W questions (see pages 1-2) in relation to the event.
- ♦ 1000-1500 words (4-5 pages)
- ♦ Typewritten, double-spaced
- ♦ On the cover page, include the title of the event, the *Harmony* section, and Scripture passage you have chosen.

Research

- ♦ In addition to your own study of the text, use resources from the Backgrounds section of the Bibliography. *Do not use commentaries.*
- ♦ List the sources you used in a bibliography at the end of your paper.

- d. **ITS Online Interactivity Forum:** Participate with other students worldwide in an ongoing asynchronous threaded discussion of two major course topics.

INSTRUCTIONS: ITS Online Interactivity Forum

Go to www.ITScourses.org/interactivity/ to register for and enter the ITS On-Line Forum. In order to get the fullest benefit from the Forum, complete the assignment **after** you have listened to *all* the lectures. Be sure to return to the forum after finishing the course to see how others respond. Follow these steps to complete the assignment:

- ♦ Post an original answer to each question for your course (75 word min.).
- ♦ Post your response to any previous answer given to each question (75 word min.).
- ♦ Submit a document to your proctor that contains the original questions, your postings, and the postings to which you responded.

NOTE: Please read the “Assignment Instructions” in the Forum for more details.

Objective: to develop critical thinking skills through personal interaction with the content of the course and the responses of others within a diverse community of learners.

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- e. **Spiritual Formation Project:** Reflect on the course and apply it.

RATIONALE: Spiritual Formation Project

Ministry preparation and the Christian life require more than academic exercises. Learners also need personal, spiritual formation, which involves theological reflection and critical thinking on their current practices and assumptions. This process occurs as learners engage in self-reflection and interaction in a community of learning. **With this in mind**, ITS includes in all courses a capstone project addressing these issues and facilitating interaction beyond the formal learning environment (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 4.1.1; 10.3.3.3).

INSTRUCTIONS: Spiritual Formation Project

Write a **five-to-six page reflective essay** and **interview a mentor**, discussing the spiritual impact of this course on your life. *Identify your mentor early in the course*, and submit the essay to your grader when you take the final exam. This last project should not be a summary of course content, but an application of course principles. Complete the following:

1. **Personal Reflection and Evaluation: *Reflect on the course*** – To integrate your academic studies with your walk of faith, reflect on the content of the course and evaluate your life in light of what you learned.
 - a. Follow these steps in your reflection:
 - Step 1: What **one** theme, principle, or concept in the course is the most significant to you personally? Why is it significant?
 - Step 2: What portion(s) of the course brought this theme/principle/concept to light?
 - Step 3: Think about your past. Why is it vital now for you to deal with and apply this theme/principle/concept?
 - Step 4: How should this affect your thoughts and actions, and what *specific steps* should you take to *concretely* apply what you have learned?
 - b. Write your answers to the above questions in full paragraph form. (Recommended length for this reflection: **approximately three pages**)
 - c. Give a copy of this reflection to your mentor (see #2).
2. **Community Reflection and Interaction: *Interview a mentor*** – Since the Holy Spirit uses the input of others to guide and form His people, interview a mentor according to the following guidelines:
 - a. Who should you interview? (1-3 are required; 4-6 are recommended)
 1. Someone with whom you have a reasonably close relationship.
 2. Someone who is a mature Christian ministry leader (i.e. a pastor).
 3. Someone who is **not** your grader or a family member.
 4. Someone who values the spiritual formation process.
 5. Someone who is familiar with and values the subject of the course.
 6. Someone who has experience using the content of the course in ministry.

NOTE: **Identify your mentor early in the course**, and give him/her the page entitled "Guidelines for Mentors."

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INSTRUCTIONS: Spiritual Formation Project (continued)

b. Focus of the interview – Your interview should focus on the issues and questions you raise in your essay. For example:

- ♦ What feedback can your mentor give in response to your essay?
- ♦ In light of the course content, are the conclusions you made appropriate? Why or why not?
- ♦ What additional advice, deeper insights or broader applications might he/she suggest from his/her own life and ministry?

NOTE: Conduct this interview either in person (preferred) or over the phone. Do **not** use electronic communication (i.e. email, instant messenger, etc). Suggested length: 45 minutes.

3. **Synthesis and Application: *Draw your final conclusions*** – Having reflected on the course and the discussion with your mentor, synthesize what you have learned in these three sections:

a. Section 1: Begin your essay with the personal reflection from #1 above. This should be exactly what you gave your mentor for the interview.

b. Section 2: Comment on your interview, explaining what you discussed and the insights you gained from your mentor. Include the following:

- ♦ What were the mentor's comments regarding your essay?
- ♦ What advice did he/she give?
- ♦ How did his/her comments expand or correct your application of the course?
- ♦ Include the person's name, occupation, and the length of the interview.

c. Section 3: Conclude with a synthesis of what you have learned. Answer the following:

- ♦ If your mentor corrected any thoughts in your "Personal Reflection and Evaluation", how do you feel about these corrections? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- ♦ Synthesizing your thoughts from section one and your mentor's insight in section two, what final conclusions have you reached? How is this different from section one?
- ♦ In light of the interview and further reflection, what additional, specific changes need to occur in your life and what concrete steps will you take to implement them?

NOTE TO STUDENTS: Your effort in this assignment will determine its benefit. If by the end of this course you have not yet reflected critically on your life in light of what you have studied, allow this assignment to guide you in that process. The instructor for this course will not score your essay based on the amount of spiritual fruit you describe; so do not exaggerate (or trivialize) what you have learned. **The primary grading criteria is that you have thoughtfully considered the principles of the course and realistically sought to apply them to your life.** If you have done this and met the minimal requirements (as noted above), you will earn the full points for this assignment.

Note on confidentiality: Perhaps the Holy Spirit is dealing with you in some very personal areas of your life. Because of this, your grader will keep your essay entirely confidential and either return or discard it.

Objective: to stimulate reflection and interaction on course principles in order to enhance personal spiritual formation.

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4. Examinations

Mid-Course Examination (Taken after Lecture 10)

Covers Sections 1-103 of the *Harmony*

Final Examination (Taken after Lecture 24)

Covers Sections 104-259 of the *Harmony*

Both exams are closed book. You may not use a Bible or the *Harmony* during either exam.

- a. **Types of items:** Detailed study sheets for the exams are located in the introductory section of the Learning Guide. Both exams have two types of items:
- Integrative questions: In precise, concise responses, demonstrate your understanding of key themes in the Life of Christ by summarizing and synthesizing the information and issues presented in class.
 - Map identification: On maps of Palestine, Galilee, and Jerusalem, identify key locations in the life of Christ.
- b. **Completion times:** You will have 2 hours to complete each exam under proctored conditions.

Course Grading

1.	Reading	
2.	Listening to tapes	
3.	Post-Tape Questions	10%
4.	Background Reports	20%
5.	5 W Eyewitness Report	10%
6.	ITS Online Interactivity Forum	5%
7.	Spiritual Formation Project	15%
8.	Mid-Course Examination	20%
9.	Final Examination	20%
		<u>100%</u>

Guidelines for Mentors

(Students, give this sheet to your mentor for the Spiritual Formation Project.)

Thank you for your involvement in this student's ITS coursework. We believe the Christian life is more than an academic exercise, so we encourage students to critically reflect on their life in light of what they learn and then apply those insights to the daily life of faith.

Therefore, students taking ITS courses are required to complete a final assignment called the "*Spiritual Formation Project*." This assignment involves two parts: an **essay** and an **interview**:

The ESSAY: After completing their coursework, students reflect on the content of the course, evaluate their lives, and discuss the **one** theme, principle or concept that is most significant to them and why. Students are to identify specific ways this theme/principle/concept should apply to their lives and what action steps they plan to take in order to make these changes a reality.

The INTERVIEW: After writing this reflection, students give a copy to their mentor and meet with him/her to discuss their thoughts and get feedback. **The goal of this interview is to facilitate the student's growth through interaction with a mature believer.**

NOTES ON THE INTERVIEW:

- ◆ You do **not** need to be familiar with the course to participate in this interview. You will primarily respond to the thoughts of the student. (However, general knowledge of the subject matter of the course and/or experience applying it to ministry is valuable.)
- ◆ Prior to meeting with the student, read his/her "Personal Reflection and Evaluation" and prepare to discuss the following:
 1. What feedback can you give the student in response to his/her essay?
 2. Are the student's conclusions from the course appropriate? Why or why not?
 3. What additional advice, deeper insights or broader applications would you suggest from your own life and ministry?
- ◆ Meet with the student either in person (preferred) or over the phone. Do not use electronic communication (i.e. email, instant messenger, etc.).
- ◆ Suggested length of the interview: 45 minutes

Thanks again for participating in this project! You have a real opportunity to guide this student in the application process and to help him/her connect academics to life – a *valuable process for all who wish to grow in Christ.*

NOTE: If the student's school makes any changes to this assignment, their requirements should replace those described here.



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Course Bibliography

1. Archaeology

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DeVries, LaMoine F. *Cities of the Biblical World* (Peabody, MA: Henrickson Publishers, Inc., 1997)

Kelso, James L. *An Archaeologist Looks at the Gospel* (Waco, TX: Word, 1969)

Price, Randall. *The Stones Cry Out: What Archaeology Reveals about the Truth of the Bible* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1997)

Thompson, J. A. *The Bible and Archaeology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982)

Unger, Merrill F. *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962)

Wiseman, D. J. and Yamauchi, Edwin. *Archaeology and the Bible, An Introductory Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979)

2. Geography

Baly, Denis. *The Geography of the Bible: A Study in Historical Geography* (New York: Harper, 1957)

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Cleave, Richard. *The Holy Land Satellite Atlas* (Nicosia, Cyprus: Rohr, 1994)

Grollenburg, J. H. *Atlas of the Bible* (London: Nelson, 1957)

Nun, Mendel. *Gergesa (Kursi): Site of a Miracle, Church and Fishing Village* (Kibbutz Ein Gev, Israel: Tourist Department and Kinnereth Sailing Col, 1989)

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Oxford Bible Atlas, 3rd Edition (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1962)

3. History

Bruce, F. F. *New Testament History* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972)

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Habermas, Gary R. *Ancient Evidence for the Life of Jesus* (Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1984)

Hoehner, Harold W. *Herod Antipas* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980)

Lewis, Jack P. *Historical Backgrounds of Bible History* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971)

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4. Backgrounds (Cultural and Religious)

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Clow, William M. *The Day of the Cross* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909)

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6. Selected Commentaries

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