

# REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



**DALLAS**

**Hebrews–Revelation (11NT5350/01)**

Spring 2020

Thursday, 9:00am-12:15pm

**Dr. Ben Dunson**

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## **PROFESSOR CONTACT INFORMATION**

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Phone: 214.295.8588

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

An introduction to the General Epistles and Revelation that includes the history, setting, theme, purpose, and message of each book.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. To explore, and be able to articulate, reading strategies for approaching Hebrews, the General Epistles and the Book of Revelation that are sensitive to the unique genre and content of each letter.
2. To introduce students to central theological themes in these letters.
3. To develop skills in faithful interpretation through in-depth study of selected passages in these letters. We could spend years studying each of these books, so we will have to be selective.
4. To introduce students to the historical and cultural context of these letters.
5. To deepen students' understanding of how these letters contribute to our overall understanding of biblical teaching and how they all must be understood in light of the finished redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

## **REQUIRED READINGS**

1. The Bible: Hebrews to Revelation (twice). Any translation is acceptable, as long as it is a translation and not a paraphrase (such as The Message). I use the ESV and will normally read from this version in class.
2. Michael Kruger (ed.). *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospel Realized*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2016 (chs. 19-25, appendix D).

3. Geerhardus Vos. *The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Phillipsburg: P&R, 1956.
4. Brandon D. Crowe, *The Message of the General Epistles in the History of Redemption: Wisdom from James, Peter, John, and Jude*. Phillipsburg: P & R, 2015.
5. Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

## COURSE EXPECTATIONS

1. **Attendance:** Attendance is expected at every class.
2. **Readings:** All assigned readings should be read **before** the class date listed on the schedule handed out at the beginning of the semester.
3. Bring a bible to each class.
4. Laptops (and iPads, iPhones, etc.) are **NOT** allowed in this course. Multitasking simply doesn't work. It prevents you from learning as well as you can.

Banning laptops, however, is not just about you and your learning, but about your neighbor and his or her learning: if we are honest many (most?) of us simply do not have the self-control to sit for 3 hours without checking email, Facebook, texts, etc. One little check won't hurt, right? But then we actually do this more than we realize, and when we are all together in one room doing this it becomes very distracting for your fellow students and for your professor (the same goes for checking iPhones under the table).

One objection to this is that having detailed, easily searchable, notes will be useful for your future ministry. I completely agree. That is why you should do what educational researchers are suggesting more and more (and which I know from personal experience works very well): when you are listening to a lecture write down that which is most important; focus on the main thoughts being conveyed. Do not attempt to transcribe what is said verbatim like a court stenographer. By focusing on the main ideas, main biblical texts, etc., *you are already engaged in the process of learning*, which is not the case when you simply spend all of your energy copying every word down. Then, either throughout the semester, or as you prepare for exams, type your notes on a computer. Then condense them in a separate file for use in studying (and then perhaps consider condensing them again!). Each time you take your notes and rewrite them or condense them you are processing the material in a new way, and *this helps you learn it*. And then you will have searchable notes to refer to in the future as well.

If you are interested, these articles give you more of a feel for why I am doing this:

- <https://mobile.nytimes.com/2017/11/22/business/laptops-not-during-lecture-or-meeting.html?mwrsm=Facebook&referrer=https://t.co/IEkweLyf89?amp=1>
- <http://www.npr.org/2016/04/17/474525392/attention-students-put-your-laptops-away>
- <http://news.stanford.edu/news/2009/august24/multitask-research-study-082409.html>

If you are still not convinced, then you can blame Kevin DeYoung:

- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/why-im-not-allowing-laptops-and-tablets-in-my-seminary-class/>

5. As a courtesy, please do not tweet, or otherwise post, comments made by the professor or other students without asking permission first.

## ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

1. Textbook and biblical readings (10%)

- a. You will be required to certify on your honor (on your final exam) that you have read all of the assigned reading material (including reading Heb-Rev twice in English translations [unless you want to read it in Greek!]). I will list each reading separately so you can estimate what percentage you completed. Reading means that you make every effort to understand the main points and reasons given for those points. This normally will require you to read and comprehend every paragraph, although not necessarily every word in every sentence. Skimming while seeking to understand the content is acceptable, but simply passing your eyes over words, sentences, paragraphs, pages, etc., is not.
  - b. Begin your reading with Kruger chapter on Hebrews and Vos book. Then continue through Kruger chapters and read Crowe, and then Bauckham.
2. Outlines of Biblical Books (10%)
    - a. One outline for each biblical book. These outlines must be 2-3 pages double-spaced for Hebrews and Revelation, and approximately 1 page for the rest of the books. Outlines should begin with Roman numerals (I, II, etc.) and then move to a, b, etc. If you need a third level of indentation use i, ii, etc. Try not to indent excessively. You may **not** copy or base your outline on any external source (study Bible notes, commentaries, etc.). This must be based *solely* on your own reading and summarizing of the biblical books.
3. Exegetical Paper (35%)
    - a. 10-12 page exegetical paper. The purpose of this paper is to help you develop your skills in exegeting the biblical text, while also focusing on developing your ability to translate your research into a sermon or talk on the biblical text you choose to write on. Your paper will consist in explanation of the biblical text, the articulation of a central homiletical proposition (main preaching point), and a brief sermon/talk outline.
    - b. I will provide a handout with the requirements for the paper at the beginning of the semester. I will also provide a brief guide for moving from exegesis to sermon preparation.
  4. Final Exam (45%)
    - a. This exam will consist of several essay questions of varying lengths (answers will range from a single paragraph to 1-2 pages). The first two questions will be about issues discussed in the section “Background Issues” in each chapter of the Kruger volume. Examples would include questions such as “Discuss the various arguments about the authorship of Hebrews,” or “Discuss the various arguments about when Revelation was written.” We will not discuss this “special introduction” material extensively in class, so it is very important that you study the Kruger material carefully. The remaining questions will be on exegetical issues or theological themes, and will be based primarily on the lecture material. Examples would include questions such as “How should we make sense of the warnings found in Hebrews?” or “In 2 Peter, what does it mean that believers are “partakers of the divine nature” (1:4)?”
    - b. You will take the final exam in a single 3-hour sitting at a date to be specified later. You may use an English or Greek bible (without any study helps, including concordances, study notes, etc.) during the exam, but no other helps are allowed.
    - c. The exam will be from 9:00am-12:15pm on Thursday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

# EXEGETICAL ASSIGNMENT AND SERMON OUTLINE GUIDELINES

## General Information:

- Your assignment must be between 10-12 pages long, Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins all around.
- You must submit your paper via email: [bdunson@rts.edu](mailto:bdunson@rts.edu).
- This assignment is due by 11:59pm on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020.
- You may find it useful to consult the following if you are struggling to figure out what “exegesis” of a passage looks like. That said, you are not required to follow Fee’s exegetical procedure.
  - Gordon D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; Louisville: WJK, 2002).
- Format your papers according to the *SBL Handbook of Style* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), or Turabian’s *Manual for Writers* (9<sup>th</sup> ed.). Make sure you know how to format footnotes correctly. You will be graded accordingly. If you are unsure, here is a helpful (condensed) guide: <https://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/pubs/SBLHSupp2015-02.pdf>. For more information consult the *SBL Handbook* or *Turabian*.
- Papers will be graded according to content and style (correct grammar and spelling, lack of typos, etc.). Proofread!
- Neither the biblical text you are commenting on, nor your sermon proposition and outline, counts as part of your page requirement. You may include this as a separate appendix (esp. if you have translated it from the Greek yourself), but do not include it in the body of your paper (on the first page, etc.).

## Your exegetical assignment is an opportunity for you to work closely with a particular passage in Hebrews–Revelation:

- **The basics:** For your passage you will do a verse-by-verse analysis, although you must be able to describe the meaning of the verse within the context of the flow of thought it is situated in. In other words, do not treat each verse as an isolated unit of meaning. All human communication makes sense only in the context of the whole writing, speech, etc., within which it is found. One of the perennial temptations for those preparing to teach and preach the Bible (and for all Christians) is to treat single verses of scripture as isolated nuggets of biblical truth. This often leads to serious misinterpretation. The Bible is not a series of spiritual slogans slung together.
- You need to isolate a self-contained passage in your selected biblical book. Since this is a relatively short paper you should pick a short(ish) passage. A self-contained passage is one where you can isolate a single main idea, although there will often be various sub-points that contribute to that main idea.
- **The focus of exegesis is explanation, not application.** Application is *absolutely necessary and vital* for a biblically faithful sermon, but before we get to the step of determining how to *apply* the text to the hearts and lives of God’s people, we must first make sure that we have accurately explained the *meaning* of the text. That is the purpose of this assignment. Another way to put this is this: do not spend your limited space telling me the significance of the text, or what it means in the lives of God’s people. Simply show me that you have carefully considered what it means. It is very easy to want to jump straight to application in writing a

sermon, before you have done the painstaking work of coming to understand precisely what every word in the text means.

- A good way to begin explaining the details of the text is to read it several times (preferably in Greek) and make a list of the most important details and potential difficulties that need explanation. If you cannot read Greek then consult at least one commentary at the beginning of your work that interacts with the Greek text and use that to help you make your list of items that need discussion. This could include determining the meaning of words in the context of your passage, figuring out the logical structure of the passage, figuring out how each sentence is connected to what precedes and follows it (see next point below), and so on.
- One of the most important things you need to do is explain how each verse is connected to what precedes and follows it. Connecting words (therefore, since, because, for, etc.)—“logical connectors”—are vital in this regard. If you do not know Greek, make sure you consult a good commentary that explains the nature of these logical connectors. Make sure you understand the logical flow of thought and that this is reflected in your analysis. For help on this point (even though it is not specifically about Hebrews–Revelation) consult the following: Thomas R. Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), pp. 97-124.
- Not every verse will require the same amount of explanation. The meaning of some verses in your passage will be more obvious, while some will require lengthier discussion. In other words: do not fill your paper over-explaining the blatantly obvious parts of your passage, while neglecting the more difficult parts. **This is very important:** make sure that you devote the bulk of your space to explaining that which is difficult, which requires knowledge of the OT background, etc.
- Word studies can be useful, but must be used with caution. Avoid attempting to pack theology into single words. The theological ideas in the text flow from the overarching argument being unfolded by the author (on the level of the sentence, paragraph, and even entire writing), not simply from individual words (although you need to know what the words mean to make sense of the argument). A classic, bad example of a word study is to argue that the Greek word *dynamis*, from which we eventually get the English word dynamite means overwhelming, explosive, unstoppable, divine power (or some such thing). Thus one might argue regarding “power” in Rom 1:16: “The word translated power is the Greek for dynamite; so the gospel is God’s dynamite, which will shake the soul, break the heart, stir the spirit, destroy the flesh, and set into operation a new creation” (*Guardian of Truth Magazine* 28.10, p. 293; May 17, 1984). The Greek word simply means “power” (and obviously the idea of dynamite could not have been present to a biblical author thousands of years before dynamite was invented). If a biblical author wants to talk about the immensity of God’s power, he is going to do so using sentences and paragraphs that express such an idea. Perhaps our quote *does* reflect what Paul was trying to express in Rom 1:16, but we would have to argue for that based on the context of his argument (as it unfolds in the whole letter), and not on the basis of a single word. Words (by themselves) simply do not convey theology. For more help in avoiding a series of language fallacies consult D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996).
- Make sure to study possible Old Testament quotations or allusions in your passage. This will usually be a vital element of your explanation of the meaning of your passage, even if it does not seem so when you first begin your study. Consult concordances and cross references in your Bible and Study Bibles. The Nestle-

Aland Greek New Testament (28<sup>th</sup> ed.) has very good cross references back to Old Testament quotations and allusions in the margins for each verse of the New Testament. See also G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson (editors), *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

- You must consult at least 8 academic sources. By academic I do not mean “non-spiritual,” but rather “rigorous.” Do not quote blog posts and web posts, for example. Focus on biblical commentaries, journal articles on your passage, academic books dealing with the passage and letter you are writing on, New Testament theologies, systematic theologies, etc.

### **What follows are some guidelines to help you prepare a strong exegetical assignment:**

- Avoid making observations that simply restate the passage in different words; or that are pedestrian. Instead, make observations that draw out the passage’s meaning and significance.

An example:

Rom 3:9: “What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,”

Mere restatement of Rom 3:9:

Paul is saying that both Jews and Greeks are guilty of sin.

Example of exegeting and drawing out the meaning of Rom 3:9:

First, we must determine the meaning of what the ESV translates as “Are we Jews any better off?” This phrase could be taken as asking whether the Jews have any advantage of Gentiles, but it could also be a question of whether they are advantaged in “every way”? In this immediate context Paul has already said that Jews are privileged in that they have the word of God (Rom 3:2). Given this fact it seems unlikely that Paul is actually asking whether Jews are better off at all: he has already said that they are. More likely, then, he is asking whether their privileges extend beyond possession of the word of God. The ESV could be modified to capture this: “are we *wholly* advantaged?” which is a possible translate of προεχόμεθα. Paul’s answer, according to the ESV, can also be translated differently. “No, not at all” (ESV) would seem directly to contradict the privilege stated in 3:2 (see also Rom 9:4-5). The Greek phrase οὐ πάντως more naturally translates as “not in every way.” The sense, then, would be that Paul is not denying certain Jewish privileges (in this context: the word of God), but *is* denying that Jews are privileged in every way possible, especially regarding whether they will be saved or not. They most certainly are not: “For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin” (Rom 3:9d, defended from the OT in vv. 10-18).

- You should be able to state the main idea of your text as well as how all the secondary ideas contribute to that main idea. Use as much explanation as is necessary so that someone could read your work and then explain in simple terms

to someone else what God intends his people to know from your passage. An example of the kinds of things you would need to explain in (for example) Rom 5:1-5 would be this: what exactly does it mean to “rejoice in hope in the glory of God” (5:2)? Determining how the word “hope” is used in the Bible, and in Paul in particular is important, as is figuring out how the Bible (and especially Paul) characteristically speaks of “glory.” But make sure that you focus on how these words are being used in the context of this particular argument of Paul’s about the benefits that flow from justification.

- Avoid pointing out obvious grammatical or syntactical facts, i.e., “this noun is a genitive;” “this verb is in the aorist;” “this statement is a conditional clause.” Instead, explain the significance of your grammatical and syntactical observations.
- Avoid making arguments based on the aspect of the verb or verbal. Instead, make arguments that can be supported by other considerations. Verbs have a limited range of possible interpretations, but it is the context which will determine which usage is correct in a given instance.
- Avoid drawing observations *without* reference to the statements or paragraphs immediately preceding or following the verse in question. This does not mean that every observation should make such references. Rather, make sure that you do not overlook this important element of exegesis. Instead, try, as much as possible, to incorporate the immediate context of the passage and the context of the letter as a whole into your observations. If a word or concept finds meaningful parallels elsewhere in the letter you are examining, reference it.
- Avoid making unsubstantiated assertions. Instead, take time to defend the claims that you make from the text.

### **Sermon Outline:**

- The goal in an assignment like this is that you would be able to use the fruits of your exegetical research in the life of the church. To do this, you will create a brief homiletical outline that consists in the following: First, state your central homiletical proposition. This proposition is *not* identical with your main exegetical point, although it must be directly based on your main exegetical point. The central homiletical proposition must be framed as a *preachable* proposition (see Point 1 in “**Cutting it Straight**” – on which, see below). Then state a certain number of ways in which your text further unpacks this central homiletical proposition. You do not have to restrict the number of points to three (as is often done), but you may find that to be a good number as far as the retention of your audience is concerned (I often find that to be the case, but would not insist on it).
- Please consult the guide “**Cutting it Straight: How to Prepare a Message**” that has been posted to populi, since it goes into much greater detail with a helpful discussion of how to move from exegesis to the crafting of a sermon outline. When creating your own homiletical proposition and sermon/talk outline use this guide to structure the presentation **you will attach to the end of your paper**.
- This is not required, but in thinking through how to craft the main point and subpoints of a sermon I would highly recommend consulting the book *The Heart is the Target: Preaching Practical Application from Every Text* by Murray Capill (P&R Publishing, 2014). Chs. 2 and 4 of Capill’s book will be especially helpful for thinking through how to move from exegesis to heart and life application of the text you have chosen for this assignment, although I would highly recommend the whole book for all future preachers.

- An example, again using Rom 5:1-5 (and this is not to suggest that this is the *only* way to create such an outline for this unit):

*Homiletical proposition:* “In our text Paul shows us four central realities that flow from the fact that believers have been declared to be in the right with God through faith in Jesus Christ.”

*Rest of Sermon/Talk Outline:* “First, that we have peace with God. Second, that we have gained access by faith into grace that is sufficient for all of life. Third, that we should therefore rejoice as we look to the future glorification we will receive from God in heaven. And finally, that we should rejoice even more in our suffering, because of the fruit it produces when faithfully endured.”

These, then, will be the main points of your sermon or talk.

You certainly could come up with a different proposition and outline. I make no claim to have created the only faithful outline for preaching a sermon on this text. Hopefully, however, this will help you craft your own homiletical proposition and sermon/talk outline.

- *A final (and vital!) word:* Don’t preach moralism or steps for a better life. Don’t preach cultural analysis. Don’t preach interesting and uplifting stories. Preach Christ Jesus and him crucified for sinners (1 Cor 1:23; 2:2). Show your people the good news! Every sermon or biblical talk you give must be focused on how Christ’s death is good news for sinners. Focus on the details of how your specific text shows us some dimension of what Jesus Christ has done on the cross for helpless, guilty sinners. An excellent book for helping you to think through the richness of the cross is Donald Macleod, *Christ Crucified: Understanding the Atonement* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014). The gospel of Christ crucified is certainly at the heart of Rom 5:1-5: we are legally in the right (justified) with God solely because of Christ’s death for us, and we are therefore at peace with the God who was once our enemy. This gives us access by faith to grace that is sufficient to stand through all of life’s difficulties, and it causes us to rejoice in our future hope, the glory of God. And finally the work of Christ on the cross for us is the only thing that can sustain us in the midst of suffering, which God also uses for our good. There will be plenty of ways in which you will also call God’s people to a response from a text like this (for instance: the necessity of faithfully responding to suffering, since no fruit will come from it otherwise), but our response must always flow from the grace we have first received in and through Christ.
- *A (final, final) word on using secondary sources:* the focus of your paper should not be a mere summary of the views of other scholars and all of the various interpretive options that you find in your secondary reading. The focus is on explanation of the meaning of your text. You are certainly free to employ the arguments of secondary sources (assuming you correctly cite them), but do not allow a discussion of secondary sources to distract you from your main point, getting to the heart of the text.

**Course Objectives Related to MDiv\* Student Learning Outcomes**

Course: Hebrews–Revelation (11NT5350/01)  
 Professor: Ben Dunson  
 Campus: Dallas  
 Date: Spring 2020

<b>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</b> <i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i>		<b>Rubric</b> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None	<b>Mini-Justification</b>
<b>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</b>	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Strong	The course strongly engages Scripture, furnishing students with knowledge of a variety of topics.
<b>Scripture</b>	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Strong	Students will spend a significant amount of time studying and mediating upon Scripture. The class requires students to research and write on a passage in Hebrews-Revelation.
<b>Reformed Theology</b>	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	At various points, we will discuss how passages in Hebrews-Revelation are relevant for Reformed Theology. It is vital that students are able to see that their theological system is <i>biblical</i> , and this will be one goal of this class.
<b>Sanctification</b>	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.	Moderate	Truly faithful study of Scripture must lead to spiritual transformation, and the goal of the exposition in this class will be this very thing.
<b>Worldview</b>	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues	Strong	Hebrews to Revelation provides rich resources for many pressing matters of Christian existence in the world, including stressing the importance of always being ready to tell others of Christ (1 Pet 3:15), and learning how to live as strangers in a hostile world. These letters are foundational for understanding the Christian worldview.
<b>Winsomely</b>	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit		There is much to be learned in discerningly studying vantage points

<b>Reformed</b>	with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	<b>Strong</b>	other than those that are explicitly Reformed. Even when disagreeing with others, their ideas must be conveyed truthfully, and disagreements must be carried out in truth and love.
<b>Pastoral Ministry</b>	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Christians.	<b>Strong</b>	Throughout the course, attention will be given to how students are to preach and teach Hebrews-Revelation. We will often seek to move from explanation to application.