

# ERSKINE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

DN 929

**The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus**

**Fall, 2008**

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## I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, students examine Jesus' teachings about the Kingdom of God interpreted in light of the Old Testament and intertestamental Judaism, and in the context of first century Palestine. Students then analyze contemporary understandings of the Kingdom prevalent in the Church today.

*Norms Elective.* Three hours credit.

## II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

The Seminary Mission Statement affirms that "The mission of Erskine Theological Seminary is to educate persons for service in the Christian Church." (ETS 2007-2008 *Catalogue*, p. 5) The ministry of the church is grounded in an understanding of the life, work, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The Kingdom of God was the central focus of the teaching of Jesus. Thus, this course which centers in an understanding of the Kingdom is a direct expression of the mission of the school.

**More specifically, by the end of this course, the student should be able to:**

1. Define Kingdom of God and related terms;
2. Trace the development of the concept of the Kingdom of God throughout the Old Testament and intertestamental Judaism;
3. Describe the major understandings of the Kingdom that were present in Jesus' day;
4. Describe Jesus' understanding of the Kingdom both in its continuity with and its divergence from Old Testament and first-century Judaism;
5. Illustrate Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom with reference to specific Gospel texts;

6. Define realized eschatology;
7. Describe the problem of discovering the historical Jesus and define basic New Testament disciplines that have arisen to deal with it;
8. List major contemporary works on the Kingdom of God;
9. Analyze at least one of the contemporary understandings of the Kingdom of God in the church in light of the teachings of Jesus;
10. Describe the importance of understanding the Kingdom of God in light of the realities of modern church life.

### III. REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Each student must purchase the following textbooks for the course:

- Mary Ann Beavis, *Jesus and Utopia*. Philadelphia: Fortress, .  
ISBN 9780-8006-3562-6
- Paul Rountree Clifford, *The Reality of the Kingdom*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996. ISBN 0-8028-0867-0
- G. E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*. Revised Edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974. ISBN 0-8028-1531-6.
- D. S. Russell, *Between the Testaments*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965. ISBN 0-8006-1856-4.
- Geza Vermes, *Jesus in His Jewish Context*. Philadelphia: Fortress, .  
ISBN 9780-8006-3623-4.

In addition, the student will need a copy of the New Testament in a translation of his/her choice. Students who are proficient in Greek are encouraged to use the Greek New Testament (UBS or Nestle/Aland).

### IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- A. **Students must attend every class meeting.** If a student must be absent for all or part of a session, he/she is responsible for all work done and due for that session. Normally, a student who misses all or part of a session will be required to do additional work. This work must be negotiated with the professor. **A student who misses more than a total of one session will not pass the course.**
- B. Students must be adequately prepared for each class session. Adequate preparation consists of completion of all reading and/or writing assignments for that day. The format of this course will largely be lecture/discussion. It is imperative that each student be adequately prepared in order to participate in an intelligent manner in classroom discussions. It is particularly important that students read carefully beforehand the Gospel texts that will be considered in each session.

- C. During the course, students may occasionally be given short, informal assignments to research and report back to the group. These will not be graded.
- D. **Four short papers are required.** The first (Paper # 1) is an analysis of a part of the Ladd book. This paper is due in Session 1. Instructions for this paper are given as a part of the assignment for Session 1. Paper # 2 is an analysis of the Vermes book. It is due in Session 2. Paper # 3 is an analysis of the Beavis book, and it is due in Session 3. Paper # 4 (due in Session 4) is an analysis of the Clifford book. Guide-sheets will be presented for Papers 2, 3, and 4.
- E. **One major paper will be required.** In this paper, the student will choose a Synoptic text where Jesus is teaching about the Kingdom, and he/she will do a thorough exegetical study of this passage. The student will find helpful sources in the bibliographies in the textbooks and the one included in this syllabus.  
**The major paper should be no more than 25 pages long.** It must be well-researched using at least 10 scholarly sources, well written, and fully documented (footnotes or endnotes) in correct form according to Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Theses, Term Papers, and Dissertations*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition or later. The paper must also include a title page, an outline of its contents, and a bibliography in correct form. These pages do not count in the overall page requirement. The paper will be graded primarily on the basis of content but also on style and form. **The final copy of this paper is due no later than Friday, December 19. It must be submitted by this day in hard copy.**
- F. All work must be submitted on time. **Work that is turned in late may be penalized at least one letter grade.** The professor reserves the right to reject any work that is excessively late.
- G. **Drop/Add/Withdrawal**  
 Once a student has completed, signed, and submitted his/her registration to the Registrar for this class, it is a **binding contract** and billing will be based on this registration. If the student decides not to take this class, he/she must complete a “drop/add” form and secure the appropriate signatures prior to the drop/add deadline during the second week of the semester or term. If one wishes to withdraw from the course after the drop/add deadline, one must complete a withdrawal form, and tuition will be refunded on a pro rated basis. Failure to withdraw from the class properly will result in the student’s receiving a grade of “F” for the course and full tuition charges will apply. **No exceptions will be made to this policy.**

**H. Incompletes**

The grade of “I” or incomplete is given at the discretion of the professor. A grade of “I” is normally given when a student has substantially completed the requirements for a course but has been prevented by extraordinary circumstances from completing the remainder of the course requirements. A student who wishes to request an incomplete should normally complete an incomplete form prior to the end of the semester and ask the professor to grant the request. (Under unusual circumstances, the student may communicate with the professor by phone or email rather than in person, and the professor may then agree to fill out the form at the student's request. Under exceptional circumstances, the professor may initiate the process by filling out the form on the student's behalf.) If the professor grants the request, he/she will sign the incomplete form and turn it in with his/her final grade report. An “I” in any course must be removed by March 1 for the Fall Term, April 1 for the January Term, August 1 for the Spring Term, and November 1 for the Summer Term. Only the Dean may grant extensions of incompletes beyond the established completion date. Otherwise, these grades automatically become “F.”

**I. Language about God and Humanity**

Although God transcends the distinction between male and female, the Bible and the Church's historic creeds and confessions use masculine language in reference to God. Thus, the Seminary encourages all students to retain this masculine usage when speaking and writing about God. Furthermore, the Seminary recognizes that all human beings, male and female, are created equally in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), and believers of both sexes are fellow heirs of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7). Accordingly, whenever students are speaking and writing about males and females, they should use language that clearly includes both men and women (for example, by saying/writing "humanity" rather than "man" or "people" rather than "men").

**J. Conduct in Theological Discussions**

Erskine Seminary is committed to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and it expects its students to show respect for all who identify with that one Church. In all written work, oral presentations, and discussions both inside and outside the classroom, the Seminary expects students to conduct discussions of controversial issues in a context of respect for those with whom one disagrees. Please see the Community Life Statement in the Catalog for more information.

- K. The student must be careful about plagiarism. Plagiarism means that the student uses someone else's work as his/her own without given proper credit. A charge of plagiarism is a serious one which can result in the student's being expelled from the Seminary.
- L. The student is encouraged to keep a loose-leaf notebook for class and reading notes, hand-outs, etc. The literature on the teaching of Jesus in general and the Kingdom of God in particular is vast. Much attention will be given to major works in the fields. The student's notebook may provide him/her with helpful study material for future work on the topic.

## V. EVALUATION

The Seminary grade scale will be used (ETS 2007-2008 *Catalogue*, p. 35). The student's final course grade will be calculated as follows:

Four papers	=	60%
Major paper	=	40%

## VI. CLASS MEETING DATES

This class will meet from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on the following Tuesdays:

- Session 1: Tuesday, September 9**
- Session 2: Tuesday, September 30**
- Session 3: Tuesday, October 28**
- Session 4: Tuesday, December 9**

## COURSE OUTLINE

### Session 1: Tuesday, September 9

Course requirements, goals, procedures, etc.

- I. The Centrality of the Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus
  - A. Introduction
  - B. Basic definitions of the Kingdom

- C. The church's neglect of Kingdom teaching
- II. Critical Problems in Recovering Jesus' Teaching About the Kingdom
- A. Introduction
  - B. The primary sources: the Gospels
  - C. The probable formation of the Gospels
  - D. Problems with using the Gospels
  - E. The quest for the historical Jesus
    - 1. Period 1: Pre-Quest (Before 1778)
    - 2. Period 2: Old Quest (1778-1906)
    - 3. Period 3: No Quest (1906-1953)
    - 4. Period 4: New Quest (1953-1985)
    - 5. Period 5: Third Quest/Renewed Quest/Post-Quest (Since 1985)
  - F. The issues in the quest for the historical Jesus
    - 1. Can we see the Gospels as historical documents?
    - 2. Is there valuable historical information about Jesus outside the Gospels?
    - 3. Is Jesus to be understood in terms of the Old Testament prophetic tradition or Jewish apocalyptic tradition?

#### ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 1:

1. Read O. E. Evans, "Kingdom of God, Of Heaven" in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 3 (New York: Abingdon, 1962), pp. 17-26. **(to be provided)**
2. Read a Bible dictionary article (your choice of dictionary) on the parables of Jesus.
3. Read George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, Revised Edition, pp. 3-42. In a paper (**Paper # 1**) of 8-10 pages, describe the scholarly debate over how we are to understand what Jesus meant when He talked about the Kingdom of God. Describe briefly the work of at least one New Testament scholar who is representative of the various views on this issue.
4. The student is strongly encouraged to secure and read at some point W. Barnes Tatum, *In Quest of Jesus*, Revised and Enlarged Edition (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999).

### Session 2: Tuesday, September 30

- III. The Tradition of the Kingdom of God in the Old Testament

- A. Introduction
  - B. God as King
  - C. The Kingdom and the land
  - D. The Kingdom and the Messiah
  - E. The prophetic views of the Kingdom
  - F. The apocalyptic views of the Kingdom
- IV. General Expectations of the Kingdom of God in the First Century
- A. Introduction
  - B. Kingdom expectations among the Pharisees
  - C. Kingdom expectations among the Sadducees
  - D. Kingdom expectations among the Zealots
  - E. Kingdom expectations among the Essenes
  - F. Kingdom expectations among the am ha-aretz (common people)
- V. The World Into Which Jesus Came
- A. Introduction
  - B. Political tensions in first-century Palestine
  - C. The socio-economic conditions of Palestine in the first century
  - D. The religious ferment of first-century Palestine

#### **ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 2:**

1. Read D. S. Russell, *Between the Testaments*, in its entirety.
2. Read George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, Revised Edition, pp. 45-101.
3. An analysis of the Vermes book (**Paper # 2**) is due in this session.
4. The student is encouraged to secure and read at some point George R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

### **Session 3: Tuesday, October 28**

- VI. The Kingdom as Present
- A. Introduction
  - B. C. H. Dodd and “realized eschatology”
  - C. Signs of the presence of the Kingdom
    1. The return of the quenched Spirit
    2. The plundering of Satan’s house
    3. Addressing God as “Abba”

4. The urgency of Jesus' mission
- D. Selected Gospel texts on the presence of the Kingdom
  1. Mark 1:15 – The proclamation of the immediacy of the Kingdom
  2. Matthew 12:22-32 – The Kingdom and demonic powers
  3. Luke 17:20-21 – The veiled Kingdom
  4. Matthew 13:44-46 – The surprising commonness of the Kingdom
  5. Luke 4:16-30 – The liberating inclusiveness of the Kingdom
  6. Matthew 11:12 – The conflict of the Kingdom

### **ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 3:**

1. Read carefully the Gospel texts which are listed above.
2. Read George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, Revised Edition, pp. 105-304.
3. An analysis of the Beavis book (**Paper # 3**) is due in this session.

### **Session 4: Tuesday, December 9**

#### VII. The Kingdom as Future

- A. Introduction
- B. The debate over apocalyptic and Jesus (Schweitzer, Dodd, Bultmann, Beasley-Murray, Ladd)
- C. The “crisis” of Jesus' teaching
- D. Selected Gospel texts on the future Kingdom
  1. Matthew 5:3-12 – The Beattitudes: A New World Order
  2. Luke 13:28-29 – The Kingdom as a feast
  3. Mark 9:1—The radical in-breaking of the Kingdom as power
  4. Mark 4:30-32; Mark 4:26-29 – The secret Kingdom as judgment
  5. Mark 13 – The Synoptic Apocalypse
  6. Matthew 25:31-46 – The surprising standard of judgment in the future Kingdom
- E. The Son of Man and the coming Kingdom
  1. Defining Son of Man
  2. Gospel texts concerning the Son of Man and the Kingdom

#### VIII. The Importance of the Kingdom of God for the Church's Theology

- A. Introduction
- B. The relationship between the Kingdom and the Church

- C. God as the Actor in history
- D. The Kingdom and the nature of evil
- E. Signs of the Kingdom in the present

**ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 4:**

1. Read carefully the Gospel texts which are listed above.
2. Read George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, Revised Edition, pp. 307-339.
3. An analysis of the Clifford book (**Paper # 4**) is due in this session.

**MAJOR PAPER DUE NO LATER THAN FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19.**

**SELECTED WORKS ON THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE  
TEACHING OF JESUS**

- Beasley-Murray, George R. *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986.
- Borsch, F. H. *Many Things in Parables*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1988.
- Bultmann, Rudolf. *Jesus and the Word*. Trans. L. P. Smith and E. H. Lantero. New York: Scribner's, 1958.
- Dodd, C. H. *The Parables of the Kingdom*. London: SCM, 1935.
- Hiers, Richard H. *The Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Tradition*. Gainesville, Fla.: University of Florida Press, 1970.

- Horsley, Richard A. and John S. Hanson. *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985.
- Hultgren, Arland J. *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
- Jeremias, Joachim. *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus*. New York: Scribner's, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Parables of Jesus*. Second Revised Edition. New York: Scribner's, 1972.
- Jones, Peter Rhea. *Studying the Parables of Jesus*. Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 1999.
- Kummel, W. G. *Promise and Fulfillment: The Eschatological Message of Jesus*. London: SCM, 1961.
- Manson, T. W. *The Teaching of Jesus*. Second Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931.
- Perkins, Pheme. *Hearing the Parables of Jesus*. New York: Paulist Press, 1981.
- Perrin, Norman. *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*. New York: Harper and Row, 1967.
- Russell, D. S. *Prophecy and the Apocalyptic Dream*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994.
- Schweizer, Eduard. *Jesus*. Trans. David E. Green. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1971.
- Scott, E. B. *Hear Then the Parables*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990.
- Stein, Robert H. *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Jesus the Messiah*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Method and Message of Jesus' Teaching*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1978.
- Tatum, W. Barnes. *In Quest of Jesus: A Guidebook*. Revised Edition. Nashville: Abingdon, 1999.
- Theissen, Gerd and Annette Merz. *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996.
- Witherington, Ben, III. *The Jesus Quest*. New Expanded Edition. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1997.
- Wright, N. T. *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996.