

**Syllabus: The Bible—from Clay Tablets to Computer Tablets**

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**Course Code: BibSt-Fnd 5**

**Schedule:** Tuesdays, 6:00—9:00 pm, via Zoom  
January 19, February 2 & 16, March 2 & 16, April 6 & 20, May 4

**Instructor:** Paul A. Day, M.A., M.Div., D.Min.  
Contact Info: [revpaulday@gmail.com](mailto:revpaulday@gmail.com); 207 712-9896 (call or text)

**Overview:** The course provides an overview to the academic study of the Bible. The course is designed to familiarize the student with the origins and development of the Old and New Testaments, the world of the ancient Near East, the types of literature in the Bible, and the development of the canon of Scriptures. Attention will be given to the role of Textual and Higher Criticism, the history of the transmission of the Bible, the translation of the Bible in English, and its reception and use today. The course will seek to consistently demonstrate the connection between the academic study of the Bible and its devotional and pastoral use.

**Course Objectives:**

1. Introduce the basic vocabulary and major issues in the field of Biblical studies as well as the tools for effective Bible study.
2. Present the process of the development of the Bible in its cultural setting and of the canonization of the Scriptures.
3. Identify the various literary genres in the Bible and the ways to understand and interpret each type.
4. Present the history of the translation of the Bible into English and the issues involved in Bible translation, including ways to evaluate contemporary translations.
5. Examine the ways the Bible is received and studied in today's world from various non-traditional points of view that further enhance our understanding of the Scripture.

**Learning Outcomes.** As a result of successfully completing this course students will be able to:

1. Describe the role and significance of oral tradition and the documentary hypothesis in the origin of the Hebrew Scriptures.
2. Articulate in oral and written form the chronology of the formation, transmission, and canonization of the Bible, as well as the translation of the Bible into English.
3. Gain a grasp of the significance and use of various critical methods and theories for understanding the Bible for preaching, teaching and pastoral work.
4. Differentiate the many “voices” found in the Old and New Testaments.
5. Appreciate the insights offered by both traditional and non-traditional approaches to receiving and applying the message of the Bible in today's world.

**Course Requirements:**

1. Complete all assigned reading before each class session.
2. Participate in each class, with thoughtful questions and reflections during discussions.
3. Write a book report and present an oral review of two of the books listed in the supplemental reading list, or comparable books in the area of study. Selection of said books shall be by mutual agreement with the instructor. — OR —
4. Keep a journal and present an oral report on a rapid reading of the entire Bible in accordance with the reading schedule (see p. 5).

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5. Submit a final written paper covering the content of the course, including a course evaluation, no later than 10 days after the last session.

**Primary (Required) Texts:**

The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version. 5th Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Marcus J. Borg and N. T. Wright. The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions. New York: HarperCollins, 2007.

Walter Brueggemann. From Whom No Secrets Are Hid: Introducing the Psalms. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014.

Scot McKnight. The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

Bruce M. Metzger. The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001.

Jerry L. Sumney. The Bible: An Introduction. 2nd Edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014.

**Course Outline & Assignments****Prior to the First Session**

1. Familiarize yourself with the New Oxford Annotated Bible. **Read** the Preliminary essays, the essays following Revelation.
2. **Read:** Sumney, The Bible, chapters 1—3, the Epilogue, and Appendix.
3. **Read:** Metzger, The Bible in Translation, Part I, Chapter 1.

**Session 1: January 19 – Introduction to the Bible**

We will begin with an overview of the course and introduce ourselves to one another, including our contexts, as well as our goals and expectations in taking this class. The instructor will go over the syllabus, with particular attention to the supplemental reading and the alternate rapid reading of the entire Bible. We will then look at the “canons” of Scripture, and introduce “Lower” or Textual Criticism, and “Higher” Criticism

(During the week following the first session, each student will meet separately with the instructor to select their reading plan and schedule presentations.)

**Prior to the Second Session**

1. **Read** through the Book of Genesis.
2. **Read:** Sumney, The Bible, chapters 4—6.
3. **Read:** supplemental reading or rapid reading of the Bible.

**Session 2: February 2 – The Beginnings of the Old Testament**

We will explore the world of the Ancient Near East; development of writing, from clay tablets to scrolls; Egyptian, Assyrian & Babylonian texts; oral tradition; documentary hypothesis (J-E-D-P); archaeology & the Bible. We will give particular attention to the types of literature in Genesis. Then we will look at the rest of the Pentateuch and the “historical” books.

**Prior to the Third Session**

1. **Read:** Sumney, The Bible, chapters 6—9.
2. **Read:** supplemental reading or rapid reading of the Bible.

**Session 3: February 16 – Development and Canon of the Hebrew Bible**

We will continue to examine O.T. literature from Torah to Tanakh: Law, Prophets & Writings; the Septuagint (LXX), Diaspora & the intertestamental period; extrabiblical texts; Council of Jamnia; Talmud, Midrash & rabbinic tradition; and the development of the canons of the Hebrew Bible. The class session will include student presentations as appropriate.

**Prior to the Fourth Session**

1. **Read:** Brueggemann, From Whom No Secrets Are Hid.
2. **Read:** supplemental reading or rapid reading of the Bible.

**Session 4: March 2 – Psalms**

We will look at the unique place of Psalms in the Bible, its parallels to the Pentateuch and place in the history of Israel, and its uses in Jewish and Christian practice. The class session will include student presentations as appropriate.

**Prior to the Fifth Session**

1. **Read:** Sumney, The Bible, chapters 10-12
2. **Read:** Borg & Wright, The Meaning of Jesus
3. **Read:** supplemental reading or rapid reading of the Bible

**Session 5: March 16 – The Development of the New Testament Gospels**

We will explore the world of the New Testament, and the texts, sources and formation of the Gospels; What is a Gospel? genre, synoptic issues, Johannine circle; and the search for the historical Jesus. extrabiblical texts: the Didache, Early Church Fathers, Gnostic “Gospels”, Infancy narratives, etc.. The class session will include student presentations as appropriate.

**Prior to the Sixth Session**

1. **Read:** Sumney, The Bible, chapters 13-17
2. **Read:** Metzger, The Bible in Translation, Part I, Chapter 2
3. **Read:** supplemental reading or rapid reading of the Bible

**Session 6: April 6 – The Early Church & the Canon of the New Testament**

We will continue to explore the texts, sources and formation of the New Testament. We will look at Acts, the Pauline Epistles, General Epistles & Revelation; New Testament canons; extrabiblical texts: the Didache, Early Church Fathers, and pseudepigraphal literature; textual criticism:

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Majority Text & critical texts—original autographs, first canonical edition & the church's scripture. The class session will include student presentations as appropriate.

**Prior to the Seventh Session**

1. **Read:** Metzger, The Bible in Translation, Part II, Chapters 3—16
2. **Read:** supplemental reading or rapid reading of the Bible.

**Session 7: April 20 – The History of the English Bible**

We will trace the development and use of the Bible in English; the approaches to Bible translation; and how to evaluate contemporary translations. The class session will include student presentations as appropriate.

**Prior to the Eighth Session**

1. **Read:** McKnight, The Blue Parakeet
2. **Read:** supplemental reading or rapid reading of the Bible.

**Session 8: May 4 – Approaches to the Bible Today**

We will conclude by examining; various approaches to reading the Bible today, with particular attention to feminist, black, Latinx, non-White and non-Western understandings of the Bible. The class session will include student presentations as appropriate.

**Following the Final Session**

**By May 15** each student will submit a final paper on what they have learned through this course and how such understandings will enhance their ministry. Length and specific questions to be determined.

### **A Rapid Reading of the Bible & a Monthly Psalter**

The Bible was not originally divided into chapters and verses; in fact, the Geneva Bible (1560) was the first to divide the Bible into verses. However, that division has greatly affected the way we usually read Scripture – a few verses or at most a chapter at a time. Lectionary readings further chop the Bible into bite-size bits. A rapid reading of the entire Bible is designed to give one a picture of the Bible as a whole. This guide uses the Protestant Old Testament, in canonical order, and the New Testament in an order according to its various “voices.”

The Psalms are excluded from a rapid reading; they are handled separately. Rather, you are encouraged to use the Psalter daily for morning and evening prayer on a monthly cycle. (see p. 6)

### **A Guide to the Rapid Reading of the Bible**

- Week 1 – Genesis
- Week 2 – Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers
- Week 3 – Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth
- Week 4 – 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings
- Week 5 – 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
- Week 6 – Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
- Week 7 – Isaiah
- Week 8 – Jeremiah, Lamentations
- Week 9 – Ezekiel, Daniel
- Week 10 – The Twelve Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
- Week 11 – Mark, 1 & 2 Peter, Jude
- Week 12 – Matthew, Hebrews, James
- Week 13 – Luke, Acts
- Week 14 – Pauline Epistles: romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon
- Week 15 – John, 1, 2 & 3 John, Revelation

**Psalms – the Prayer Book of the People of God**

<u>Day</u>	<u>Morning</u>	<u>Evening</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Morning</u>	<u>Evening</u>
Book One					
1	Pss. 1—4	Pss. 5—7	17	79—81	82—85
2	8—9	10—13	18	86—88	89
3	14—17	18	Book Four		
4	19—21	22—23	19	90—92	93—95
5	24—26	27—29	20	96—99	100—102
6	30—32	33—34	21	103	104
7	35—36	37	22	105	106
8	38—39	40—41	Book Five		
9	42—44	45—47	23	107—108	109—111
Book Two					
10	48—49	50—51	24	112—115	116--118
Psalm 119					
11	52—55	56—58	25	vv. 1-48	vv. 49-88
12	59—61	62—64	26	vv. 89-128	vv. 129-176
13	65—67	68	27	120—127	128—134
14	69—70	71—72	28*	135—137	138—140
Book Three					
15	73—74	75—77	29	141—143	144—145
16	78:1-39	78:40-72	30	146—147	148—150
			31	146—147	148—150

\*Note: On February 28, skip to the readings for Day 30.

## Supplemental Reading List

### **A. Bible Translations**

- David Daniel. Tyndale's New Testament. [1534] New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1989.
- Everett Fox. The Schocken Bible, Vol I: The Five Books of Moses. New York: Schocken Books, 1995.
- Everett Fox. The Schocken Bible, Vol II: The Early Prophets. New York: Schocken Books, 2014.
- Richard Elliott Friedman. The Bible with Sources Revealed: A New View into the Five Books of Moses. New York: HarperCollins, 2005.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Hidden Book in the Bible. New York: Harper Collins, 1998.
- John Goldingay. The First Testament: A New Translation. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2018.
- Pamela Greenberg. The Complete Psalms: The Book of Prayer Songs in a New Translation. New York: Bloomsbury, 2010.
- Edward L. Greenstein. Job: A New Translation. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2019.
- Clarence Jordan. The Cotton Patch Version of Luke and Acts. New York: Association Press, 1969.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Cotton Patch Version of Matthew and John. New York: Association Press, 1970.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Cotton Patch Version of Paul's Epistles. New York: Association Press, 1968.
- George M. Lamsa. Holy Bible: From the Ancient Eastern Text. New York: HarperCollins, 2014.
- N. T. Wright. The Kingdom New Testament. New York: HarperCollins, 2011.

### **B. Biblical Studies**

- John Barton. A History of the Bible. New York: Viking, 2019.
- Helen K. Bond. The First Biography of Jesus: Genre and Meaning in Mark's Gospel. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020.
- Walter Brueggemann. From Judgment to Hope: A Study of the Prophets. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Prophetic Imagination. 40th Anniversary Edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018.
- John J. Collins. The Bible after Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- John J. Collins, Craig Evans, Lee Martin McDonald. Ancient Jewish and Christian Scriptures: New Developments in Canon Controversy. Nashville: Westminster John Knox, 2020.
- Philip W. Comfort, ed. The Origin of the Bible. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1992.
- James D. G. Dunn. Jesus, Paul and the Gospels. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011.
- Bart Ehrman, Craig Evans, and Robert Stewart. Can We Trust the Bible on the Historical Jesus? Nashville: Westminster John Knox, 2020.
- John Goldingay. Do We Need the New Testament? Letting the Old Testament Speak for Itself. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015.
- Craig S. Keener. Christobiography: Memory, History, and the Reliability of the Gospels. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019.
- Scot McKnight. Reading Romans Backwards: A Gospel of Peace in the Midst of Empire. Waco, TX: Baylor Univ. Press, 2019.

- David Rosenberg and Harold Bloom. The Book of J. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1980.
- Stanley Porter and Andrew Pitts. Fundamentals of New Testament Textual Criticism. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015.
- Sandy Eisenberg Sasso. Midrash: Reading the Bible with Question Marks. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2013.
- James VanderKam. The Dead Sea Scrolls Today. 2nd Edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.
- Christopher J. H. Wright. Knowing God through the Old Testament. (3 vols. in 1) Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2019.

### C. History of the Bible in English

- Benson Bobrick. Wide as the Waters; The Story of the English Bible and the Revolution It Inspired. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001.
- Tony Burke. Secret Scriptures Revealed: A New Introduction to the Christian Apocrypha. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013.
- Gordon Campbell. Bible: The Story of the King James Version, 1611—2011. New York: Oxford, 2010.
- Christian History magazines available from the Christian History Institute, Worcester, PA.
- # 3 *John Wycliffe and the 600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Translation of the Bible into English*
  - # 16 *William Tyndale: God's Outlaw*
  - # 43 *How We Got Our Bible*
  - # 80 *The First Bible Teachers*
  - # 100 *The 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the King James Bible*
- David Daniell. The Bible in English. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2003.
- David Dewey. A User's Guide to Bible Translations. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004.
- Howard Clark Kee, ed. The Bible in the 21st Century. New York: American Bible Society, 1993.
- Timothy George. Reading Scripture with the Reformers. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011.
- Roger Hodgson and Paul Soukup. From One Medium to Another: Basic Issues for Communicating the Bible in New Media. New York: American Bible Society, 1997.
- R. Todd Mangum and Mark Sweetnam. The Scofield Bible: Its History and Impact on the Evangelical Church. Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2009.
- Alister McGrath. In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How It Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture. New York: Doubleday, 2001.
- Brian Moynihan. God's Bestseller: William Tyndale, Thomas More, and the Writing of the English Bible. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003.
- Adam Nicolson. God's Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible. New York: HarperCollins, 2003.
- Jaroslav Pelikan. Whose Bible Is It? A History of the Scriptures through the Ages. New York: Viking, 2004.
- John Rogerson, ed. The Oxford Illustrated History of the Bible. New York: Oxford, 2001.
- Leland Ryken. The Legacy of the King James Bible. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Word of God in English: Criteria & Excellence in Bible Translation. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002.
- Mark L. Strauss. Distorting Scripture? The Challenge of Bible Translation & Gender Accuracy. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998.
- James R. White. The King James Only Controversy. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1995.



**D. Contemporary Approaches & Alternative Readings**

- Kenneth E. Bailey. Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospel. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008.
- Musa Dube. Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible. Nashville: Chalice Press, 2012.
- Justo Gonzalez. Santa Biblia: The Bible through Hispanic Eyes. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.
- Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler. The Jewish Annotated New Testament. New York: Oxford, 2017.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Bible with and without Jesus: How Jews and Christians Read the Same Stories Differently. New York: Harper, 2020.
- Esau McCaulley. Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020.
- Eugene Peterson. Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992.
- E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien. Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012.
- Barbara Reid. Wisdom's Feast: An Invitation to Feminist Interpretations of the Scriptures. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016.
- Luise Schottroff. The Feminist Interpretation: The Bible in Women's Perspective. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.
- Christian Smith. The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism Is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture. Grand Rapids: Brazos (Baker), 2012.
- John L. Thompson. Reading the Bible with the Dead. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.
- Jonathan L. Walton. A Lens of Love: Reading the Bible in Its World for Our World. Nashville: Westminster John Knox, 2018.
- N. T. Wright. Surprised by Scripture: Engaging Contemporary Issues. New York: HarperCollins, 2014.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Last Word: Beyond the Bible Wars to a New Understanding of the Authority of Scripture. New York: HarperCollins, 2005.

## **Bibles and Reference Works**

### **A. Bibles**

African American Jubilee Edition: King James Version. New York: American Bible Society, 1999.

Archaeological Study Bible: New International Version. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

ESV Study Bible: English Standard Version. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008.

The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version. New York: HarperCollins, 2017.

The Interlinear Bible: Hebrew-Greek-English. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986.

The Jewish Study Bible: Tanakh Translation. New York: Oxford, 2004.

The Learning Bible: Contemporary English Version. New York: American Bible Society, 2000.

NIV Study Bible: New International Version. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.

The Orthodox Study Bible: New King James Version. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008.

Serendipity Bible: New International Version. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989.

Eugene Peterson. The Message Devotional Bible. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2020. (Originally published as Conversations: The Message with Its Translator.)

### **B. Reference Works**

Kurt Aland, ed. Synopsis of the Four Gospels Greek-English Edition. German Bible Society, 2000.

Willis Barnstone, ed. The Other Bible: Ancient Alternative Scriptures. New York: HarperCollins, 1999.

David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, ed. Feasting on the Word series. Nashville: Westminster John Knox, various dates.

Raymond E. Brown. An Introduction to the New Testament. New York: Doubleday, 1997.

Walter Brueggemann and Tod Linafelt. An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination. 3rd Edition. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2020.

John Goldingay. An Introduction to the Old Testament: Exploring Text, Approaches & Issues. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Old Testament for Everyone. 17 vols. Nashville: Westminster John Knox, 2016.

Nijay K. Gupta. The New Testament Commentary Guide: A Brief Handbook for Students and Pastors. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020.

The IVP Bible Dictionary Set. 8 vols. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, various dates.

Old Testament Pentateuch	New Testament Background
Old Testament Historical Books	Jesus and the Gospels
Old Testament Wisdom, Poetry and Writings	Paul and His Letters
Old Testament Prophets	Later New Testament & Its Developments

Leander Keck, ed. The New Interpreter's Bible. 10 vols. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015.

Gerhard Kittel, ed. Geoffrey Bromiley, tr. & ed. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964.

N. T. Wright. The New Testament for Everyone. 18 vols. Nashville: Westminster John Knox, 2011.

N. T. Wright and Michael Bird. The New Testament and Its World. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019.