

Bible 2: Introduction to the New Testament

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Students in this course explore two questions as a way to construct their understanding of the New Testament:

- Who is Jesus Christ? (Christology—the Doctrine of Christ)
- What does Jesus Christ do for us? (Soteriology—the Doctrine of Salvation)

The first question develops our understanding of the person of Jesus Christ as the second Person of the Holy Trinity, the eternal Son begotten of the Father from before all ages, who is truly God, “consubstantial with the Father.” He took to himself our human nature by becoming incarnate by the action of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary his mother, and thus he is fully human. The New Testament teaches us these things as we read the Gospel narratives and the Epistles. It is essential for us to understand that the one Person Jesus Christ is fully human and fully divine, for it is as “God with us” (Matthew 1) as the incarnate Son of God that he is able to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Understanding the identity of Jesus Christ as the New Testament reveals him prepares us to examine the second key question.

The second question explores Jesus’ public ministry of teaching and healing, his formation of the disciples who will become the Apostles, and most importantly his death and resurrection. Roughly one fourth of each of the Gospels narrates Jesus’ death and resurrection, and virtually all of the Epistles are built on this framework. Jesus can save us by his death and resurrection because he is fully human and fully divine. As God he can act decisively on our behalf. As man he can fully engage our human nature and unite it to his divinity. The New Testament teaching about the Sacraments, especially Baptism and Holy Communion, links directly to our understanding of both who Jesus is and what he does for us.

The New Testament also teaches us about the Holy Spirit, who like the Father and the Son is fully God. By the Holy Spirit’s action Jesus Christ is conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary; by the Holy Spirit those who knew Jesus were empowered to receive his teaching and proclaim his message and do his works; by the Holy Spirit we are able to receive from the Holy Scriptures more than just a mere record of the events—we are able to connect with these events with their full force in the here and now. The New Testament conveys the actual reality of all of this to us through the sacred text, pointing to the living personal presence of Jesus Christ and inviting us into relationship with him and with the whole of his body the Church.

Therefore, this course is on one level academic learning to become knowledgeable of the Scriptures. On a deeper and more important level, this course points to Jesus Christ who says “I am the door” (John 10) and “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14). Let us come out to meet him!