

COURSE SYLLABUS

The Pentateuch

Course Lecturer: R. Laird Harris, PhD

Former Professor and Department Chair of Old Testament at
Covenant Theological Seminary

Course Description

Understanding the Pentateuch is essential to understanding the Bible. In this course, learners will study the contents of the Pentateuch and consider the particular Pentateuchal problems of evolution and higher criticism in light of its archaeological background. The course explores such historic events as the Creation, the Flood, and the Exodus, and highlights the lives of the Patriarchs and Moses. Students will also examine the content, meaning, and applicability of the laws that form the foundation of Israel's theocracy.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, you should be able to do the following:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the five books of Moses.
- Recognize the principles for interpreting those five books.
- Interpret Genesis 1-11 and offer arguments in defense of the biblical teaching against evolutionary claims.
- Articulate answers to higher critical attacks on the unity of the Pentateuch.
- Know the archaeological background of Pentateuchal history and show its bearing on the interpretation of the text.

Course Lecturer



R. Laird Harris, PhD (1911-2008)

Education:

- Dropsie University, PhD
- Westminster Theological Seminary, BTh and ThM
- University of Pennsylvania, MA
- University of Delaware, BS
- Washington University, graduate work

Teaching Career:

- Adjunct professor and founding faculty member of the Old Testament Department, Knox Theological Seminary (1989-1990)

- Professor and Department Chair of Old Testament, Covenant Theological Seminary (1956-1981)
- Academic Dean, Covenant Theological Seminary (1964-1971)
- Professor, Faith Theological Seminary (1937-1956)
- Instructor, Wheaton College Graduate School, University of Pennsylvania, and the Near East School of Archaeology and Bible in Jerusalem
- Visiting professor in many countries around the globe, including Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea, and Singapore
- Lecturer at several universities and seminaries in the United States

Other Career Highlights:

- Ordained in the Presbyterian Church of America
- Moderator of the 10th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (1982)
- Elected Chairman of the NIV Editorial Board, the Committee on Bible Translation that produced the *New International Version* (1970-1974)
- President of the Evangelical Theological Society (1961)
- Moderator of the Bible Presbyterian Synod (1956)
- Founding member of the Evangelical Theological Society (1949)

Publications:

- Numerous books, including *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible*, *Introductory Hebrew Grammar*, and *Man—God’s Eternal Creation*
- Consulting editor and contributor to the *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*

Course Texts

Though not required, the student is encouraged to read each chapter of the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) at least twice. Each reading should be completed in a different modern translation, preferably King James Version, New King James Version, New American Standard, or the New International Version.

Course Methods

The lecture content for each lesson is provided in two easy-to-use formats: audio and PDF text (if available). Students can choose the medium (or combination of media) that most closely aligns with their individual learning styles.