

COURSE SYLLABUS

The Epistle to the Hebrews

Course Lecturer: Dennis E. Johnson, PhD

Course Description

To what extent does the New Covenant replace the Old? How should Jews regard their crucified Messiah? Learners discover answers to these and other important questions by studying the background, context, and content of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The course focuses on the key interpretive issues and theological contributions found in this rich, christocentric book. The goal of the course is to strengthen your confidence in the superiority of Jesus and the New Covenant, and to equip you to “encourage one another daily.”

Course Objectives

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

(Cognitive)

- Reach informed conclusions regarding the epistle’s authorship, original audience, and purpose
 - › List the identifications that have been proposed regarding the authorship of Hebrews.
 - › Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the argument for each proposal.
 - › Identify the evidence within the epistle that provides information concerning its original audience and their situation.
 - › Identify the proposals that have been offered regarding the identity and life situation of the epistle’s original audience.
 - › Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the argument for each proposal.
 - › Integrate evidence concerning the audience’s situation and the epistle’s main themes into a statement of the epistle’s purpose(s).
- Describe the genre, method of theological argument, and main themes of the Epistle to the Hebrews.
 - › Identify features within the epistle that indicate its genre.
 - › Infer interpretive principles and strategies appropriate to the genre.
 - › Outline the structure of the epistle, the main movements in its argument.
 - › Describe and illustrate its method of Christological interpretation of Old Testament texts.
- Discuss significant questions in the interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews, demonstrating acquaintance with alternative views and offering evidence and argumentation for the view that you prefer.
 - › Christology and the question of Jesus’ “being made perfect”
 - › Relationship of old covenant and new covenant

- History of redemption
- Mode of revelation
- Covenant law
- Typology: shadow and reality
- Sacrifice for atonement
- Worship and sanctuary
- Land/City-inheritance promises
- › Priesthood in the order of Melchizedek
- › Wilderness-paradigm of the Christian community's present experience
 - Wilderness generation
 - House of God
 - Priests of God
- › Apostasy

(Affective)

- Glorify God for the superiority of Christ, the mediator of the new and eternal covenant.
- Approach God confidently in prayer through Christ our high priest.
- Respond to present trials with persistent faith and hope.
- Take initiative to encourage struggling fellow-Christians, with compassion and confidence.
- Rejoice in the superiority of new covenant worship, centered in the Son and the heavenly Jerusalem, versus the touchable “shadows” of old covenant worship.

(Performative)

- Explain and apply passages from Hebrews so as to make clear their meaning and relevance to late-twentieth century audiences.
 - › In writing
 - › In preaching or teaching
 - › In counseling
- Replicate the hermeneutical method of Hebrews in interpreting other Old Testament texts.

Course Lecturer



Dennis E. Johnson, PhD

Education:

- Fuller Theological Seminary, PhD
- Westminster Theological Seminary, MDiv and ThM
- Westmont College, BA

Teaching Career:

- Professor of Practical Theology, Westminster Theological Seminary (since 1982)
- Teaching Assistant, Westminster Theological Seminary (1975-1976)
- Lecturer in Greek, Westmont College
- Taught and preached in Chad, Malaysia, Mexico, Singapore, Thailand, and the Ukraine

Publications:

- Writer of articles for *The Westminster Theological Journal* and the *Journal of the Evangelical Society*
- Numerous books, including *The Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation, Christ and Our Many Cultures*, and *The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption*.

- Contributor to the *New Geneva Study Bible*, *Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible*, and the *English Standard Version Study Bible*

Recommended Reading

Though not required, you may choose to read the textbook shown below to supplement your learning.

Lane, William L. *Hebrews 1-8* (WBC 47A); *Hebrews 9-13* (WBC 47B). Waco: Word, 1991.

Textbooks can be ordered through your local bookstore, various online bookstores, or through your preferred eReader when available.

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.

Course Assessment and Requirements

To earn a Certificate of Completion, you must complete the course requirements. Course requirements include:

1. Listening to all 24 audio lectures.
2. Completing a final self-assessment form in which you will reflect on the content in the course and evaluate your life in light of what you have learned. The specifics of this assessment are provided in the course materials.

Course requirements noted in this syllabus will be validated before a Certificate of Completion is awarded to any student.