

INTERPRETING THE PASSION NARRATIVES—NT 3033

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
Louisville, Kentucky

Dr. Marion L. Soards
Spring 2013

This course is an advanced level study giving critical and exegetical attention to accounts of the Passion of Jesus. We shall consider the historical background of the events of the story, the distinctive emphases of the canonical Gospel writers, and the meaning of the suffering and death of Jesus as various early Christians understood it. The work will be done with an interest in the significance of these stories for the church today.

13 February 2013 **Design and Operation of the Course: Goals, Texts, Resources, and Requirements**

20 February 2013 **Setting the Course: Introduction to the Issues and a Consideration of the Canonical Passion Predictions**

Assignment: Read SotFG §§ 159; 164; and 262; M. L. Soards, "Oral Tradition and the Canonical Passion Narratives" in H. Wansbrough, ed., Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition. JSNTS 64; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991. Pp. 334-50; M. L. Soards, "Passion Narratives," in D. N. Freedman, ed., Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000. Pp. 1011-13; and Brown, Death, pp. 3-106.

27 February 2013 **Study of the Passion Narratives: SotFG §§ 315; 330**

Assignment: Analyze the parallel portions of the Gospels, noting similarities and dissimilarities. Read Brown, Death, pp. 107-234.

6 March 2013 **Study of the Passion Narratives: SotFG §§ 331**

Assignment: Analyze the parallel portions of the Gospels, noting similarities and dissimilarities. Read Brown, Death, pp. 235-310.

- 13 March 2013 **Study of the Passion Narratives: SotFG §§ 332**
- Assignment: Analyze the parallel portions of the Gospels, noting similarities and dissimilarities. Read Brown, Death, pp. 331-560.
- 20 March 2013 **Research and Study Week**
- 27 March 2013 **Study of the Passion Narratives: SotFG §§ 333-335**
- Assignment: Analyze the parallel portions of the Gospels, noting similarities and dissimilarities. Read Brown, Death, pp. 561-660.
- 3 April 2013 **No class meeting today!**
- 10 April 2013 **Study of the Passion Narratives: SotFG §§ 336-342**
- Assignment: Analyze the parallel portions of the Gospels, noting similarities and dissimilarities. Read Brown, Death, pp. 661-877.
- 17 April 2013 **Study of the Passion Narratives: SotFG §§ 343-349**
- Assignment: Analyze the parallel portions of the Gospels, noting similarities and dissimilarities. Read Brown, Death, pp. 879-1198.
- 24 April 2013 **Study of the Passion Narratives: SotFG §§ 343-349**
- Assignment: Analyze the parallel portions of the Gospels, noting similarities and dissimilarities. Read Brown, Death, pp. 879-1198.
- 1 May 2013 **Study of the Passion Narratives: SotFG §§ 343-349**
- Assignment: Analyze the parallel portions of the Gospels, noting similarities and dissimilarities. Read Brown, Death, pp. 879-1198.
- 8 May 2013 **Study of the Passion Narratives: SotFG §§ 350-351**
- Assignment: Analyze the parallel portions of the Gospels, noting similarities and dissimilarities. Read Brown, Death, pp. 1199-1313.
-

- Texts:** Aland, Kurt, ed. Synopsis of the Four Gospels: Greek-English, 3d ed. (or any other scholarly synopsis of the Gospels—Greek or English);
- Brown, Raymond E. The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels. 2 Vols.;
- Crossan, John Dominic. Who Killed Jesus?
-

Requirements:

(1) For each week that we deal directly with the "study of the Passion Narratives" (27 February—8 May) students should:

- A. Work through the pertinent portion of the Synopsis of the Four Gospels, noting especially points of similarity and dissimilarity, as well as unusual or difficult features of the biblical texts.
- B. Summarize in a series of succinct single-sentence statements or questions the major interpretive issues in the text or texts under consideration. These statements or questions should be simply a sequence of "bullet points." For example, in relation to the study of SotFG § 332, one might summarize one issue of interpretation in either (not both) of the following ways:
- The Gospels do not agree completely regarding the time and place of Jesus' being mocked and mistreated.
- or-
- Did soldiers mock and mistreat Jesus (A) before or after the inquiry by the Jewish authorities or both and (B) before or after Peter's denials or both?

These summaries of interpretive issues may occupy no more than one page—a page with at least one-inch margins and at least a 10-point font.

- C. Pick one of the interpretive issues from the list and very briefly describe the different positions taken by interpreters; then, state which option you prefer and explain why you prefer it.

These treatments of an interpretive issues may occupy no more than one page—a page with at least one-inch margins and at least a 10-point font.

(2) Each student will read John Dominic Crossan's Who Killed Jesus? (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), and write a "critical" book review of approximately 1500 words—to be submitted no later than 4:00 p.m. on April 10, 2013. Guidelines for this assignment will be provided.

(3) By 4:00 p.m. on 13 May 2013, each student should submit a paper, approximately 3000 words length (at least one-inch margins and at least 12-point font), that interacts with scholarly sources/resources to answer one of the following questions:

- A. Why did Jesus die?
- B. Who was responsible for Jesus' death and why?
- C. What do the Passion Narratives have to say about the meaning of Jesus' death?
- D. Do the Gospel PN accounts support any or all of the classic theories of atonement? And, if so, how?

N.B. A late paper will be marked down one grade level for each day that it is late.

Grading for the Course

The grading for the course will be an evaluation of (1) the weekly summaries and interpretive treatments, (2) the review of Crossan's book, (3) the final paper on one of the four major issues given in the syllabus, and (4) preparation and participation in the operation of the course.

The brief weekly papers will count for 35% of the grade for the course.

The critical book review will count for 20% of the grade for the course.

The final paper will count for 35% of the grade for the course.

Regular preparation and participation will count for 10% of the grade for the course.

Policy Statements

1. Use of Inclusive Language

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. See for further assistance,

http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp.

2. Academic Honesty

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Multiple occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues relating to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For the Seminary policy, see The Code of Student Conduct, 6.11; the Student Handbook, p. 19.

3. Special Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (kmapes@lpts.edu) during the first two weeks of a semester and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

4. Citation Policy

Citations in your papers should follow the Seminary standard, which is based on these guides:

Turabian, Kate, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 7th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007;

and

The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003. Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

5. Attendance Policy

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Three or more absences (approximately 1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.