



## 1. Rel 211: The New Testament Gospels

"The Sermon on the Mount" from *The Life of Christ* by Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834-90)

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 Consultations: TTh 9:00 a.m., F 3:00 p.m.

## Choosing a Religion Section

- Taking a religion class at BYU is an important part of a student's university experience
  - Fortunately, numerous sections of each course are offered in any given semester or term, allowing students to be selective in the classes that they take
- Although each section of the same course covers the same scriptural material, **sections differ in their approach and in the teaching philosophies and styles of their instructors**
  - Consider carefully the objectives of a given section, the personality and teaching style of the professor, and the way the course is organized
  - **Read the syllabus carefully by next class meeting**
- **You are most welcome in this section and hopefully it will add to your understanding and appreciation of the scriptures**
  - On the other hand, *you are also free to change sections if this does not seem like the experience that you want*

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- Academic Background
  - BYU alumnus: BA (1990) in Classical Greek and Latin
  - MA and Ph.D. (University of Pennsylvania: 1992, 1997) in Ancient History
  - More details at Bio link at <http://www.erichuntsman.com>
- Church Background
  - Thailand Bangkok Mission (1984-85)
  - Former bishop (1996-2002)
  - Current Provo Temple ordinance worker, member of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir
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Samuel, Eric, Rachel, and Elaine



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## Course Description

- A survey study of the four New Testament gospels
  - Illustrate the **life, teachings, and, above all, the suffering, sacrifice, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ**
- Examine the gospels as **ancient texts and scripture**
  - As texts, setting them in their ancient historical and cultural contexts
    - appreciate their literary artistry, identifying their structures, imagery, and themes
  - As works of scripture, examining them as **testimonies of the atoning mission of the Savior**
    - Realize more fully the promise of John 20:31 that “these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.
- Keep the focus on the Savior (see Mosiah 3:5–10; more below)

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## What does the term “gospel” mean?

- *Gōdspel*, “good news” or perhaps “God-story”
  - Used to translate the Greek *euangellion*
- New Testament uses
  - During Jesus’ ministry
    - the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand (see Mark 1:14–15)
    - His healing and saving mission (see Matthew 11:2–6, Luke 7:18–23, both echoes of Isaiah 61:1)
  - Early Apostolic Period: *kérygma* or oral tradition of “preaching” about Jesus and salvation
    - Preserved stories of his miracles and deeds as well as sayings and teachings
    - Focused on Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection (see 1 Corinthians 15:1–3)
  - Late Apostolic and Canonical: a literary genre
- Broad Restoration use: the sum total of the principles and ordinances that bring the effects of the Atonement into our lives
  - Fourth Article of Faith: “the first principles and ordinances of the gospel...”

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## What are the New Testament gospels?

- **Part Hellenistic biography, part historiography, part anecdotes and teachings, part theological reflection**
- *About “the life and teachings” of Jesus?*
  - With the exception of the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke, the gospels only account for 1–3 years of the life of Jesus of Nazareth
  - Even the accounts of the “ministry” are selective
- Mark 14–16 (3/16, almost 20%) and John 13–20 (9/21, about 38%) **focus on the Passion and Resurrection narratives**
  - Ehrman: “the gospels are Passion Narratives with long introductions”
  - President Hinckley: “This is the wondrous and true story of Christmas. The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem of Judea is preface. The three-year ministry of the Master is prologue. The magnificent substance of the story is His sacrifice, the totally selfless act of dying in pain on the cross of Calvary to atone for the sins of all of us. The epilogue is the miracle of the Resurrection, bringing the assurance that ‘as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive’ (1 Cor. 15:22). There would be no Christmas if there had not been Easter. The babe Jesus of Bethlehem would be but another baby without the redeeming Christ of Gethsemane and Calvary, and the triumphant fact of the Resurrection.” (“The Wondrous and True Story of Christmas,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2000, 2)
    - This emphasis is reflected in Book of Mormon prophecy . . .

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## Mortal Ministry (Mosiah 3:5–6)



“Christ Healing by the Pool of Bethesda” from *The Life of Christ* by Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834-90)

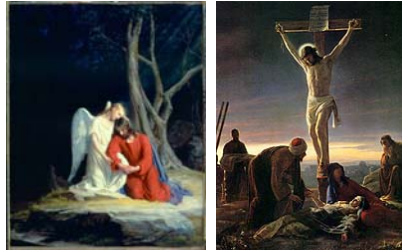
- “. . . with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases. And he shall cast out devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men.”

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## Suffering, Passion, and Sacrifice (Mosiah 3:7, 9)



“Christ in Gethsemane” and “The Crucifixion” from *The Life of Christ* by Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834-90)

- “And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people. . . And lo, he cometh unto his own, that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name; and even after all this they shall consider him a man, and say that he hath a devil, and shall scourge him, and shall crucify him.”

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## Resurrection (Mosiah 3:9, 17)

- “And **he shall rise the third day from the dead**; and behold, he standeth to judge the world; and behold, all these things are done that a righteous judgment might come upon the children of men. . . . moreover, I say unto you, that **there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.**”



Simon Dewey, “He Lives”

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## The Four Gospels

- How are the gospels related?
  - Mark and John do not seem to know of the others
  - Matthew and Luke seem familiar with Mark
  - Luke may have known Matthew
- Modern tendency: “**harmonize**” the four accounts into one chronological account of Christ’s ministry
  - **This obscures the individual way that each gospel organized its material and emphasized its themes**
  - We will begin by taking the **stories of Christ’s birth (the Infancy narratives)** first, then take the **gospels in their presumed order of composition**, and then **harmonize only the final episodes (the Passion and Resurrection narratives)**
- Traditional symbols of the Four Evangelists or gospel authors
  - Taken from the four beasts of Revelation 4:7 (cf. Ezekiel 1 and 10)
  - **Matthew=Human/Angel; Mark=Lion; Luke=Ox; John=Eagle**
    - These were not always consistent, however (see [http://myweb.lmu.edu/fjust/Evangelists\\_Symbols.htm](http://myweb.lmu.edu/fjust/Evangelists_Symbols.htm))

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## Course Objectives

- Increase the student's **knowledge of the gospels**
  - that is familiarize him or her with their basic storylines, characters, themes and theological concepts
- Help the student **read, discuss, and write about the Bible** as both a source of scriptural knowledge and **as a sacred text**
  - Become familiar with the process of **exegesis** (from the Greek "to explain," the process of closely reading and analyzing a scriptural text to understand its original meaning; more in lecture 3)
- **Strengthen individual testimonies of sacred truths, particularly of Jesus Christ** and the doctrines of the Restoration
- *Read through the entire syllabus before the next class period, noting in particular Course Requirements, Grading Policies, and all due dates*

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## Course Requirements

- Texts (LDS Standard Works, course packet)
- Online resources, Blackboard
  - Presentations, notable passage lists
- Attendance and class lectures
- Assessment
  - Quizzes, midterms, paper, final exam
- Class discussions, quizzes, and exams will be formatted with the course's three overarching objectives in mind
  - **Identifications** (scriptural knowledge)
  - **Scriptural commentary, exegetical paper** (understanding and analyzing scripture as text)
  - **Essay questions** (understanding doctrine to strengthen testimony)

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## Grading Policies

- Straight points
  - students earn grades, teachers do not give them
- Syllabus, appendix A for religion courses at BYU
- ***In no way should the grading of a religion class be considered an evaluation of one's testimony or sincerity***
  - Difference between a university-level religious education course and seminary and institute . . .
  - While testimonies should be strengthened by a serious study and discussion of the scriptures, students are evaluated on their mastery of the material covered in class
- **Students are responsible for the grades that they earn**
  - *if one needs a certain grade for academic reasons, then he or she should plan accordingly*

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## Suggestions for Class Preparation

- Read background material before beginning each text
- **Read the assigned scriptural text**
  - Use the outlines in the packet as a "road map"
  - Follow suggested reading strategies and approaches (see slide below)
- **Review class presentations**
  - Posted on Blackboard and on class website
  - The instructor may chose to focus on some slides more than others in class, understanding, needs and discussion dictate
    - *Nevertheless students are responsible for all of them*
- **Periodically review Notable Passages lists**
  - Lists important passages studied in each units
  - Not necessary to memorize chapter and verse, but *students should be able to recognize them and be able to answer basic historical, literary, and theological questions about each*
  - *Your greatest spiritual experiences will occur outside of class as you study and work with the scriptural text, so please take advantage of this opportunity to engage the scriptures in this systematic way.*
- **Review sheets** will be posted (or updated) before each quiz and exam

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## For the Next Class

Read what you can on Blackboard; otherwise the material will be summarized in class

- **Topic: Historical Background of the New Testament Gospels**
- **Packet Readings**
  - JCWNT, 16–41 (in Section 1 of the packet)
  - “Essenes,” “Herod,” “Herodians,” “Maccabees,” “Pharisees,” “Roman Empire,” “Sadducees,” BD 667, 700–702, 727, 750, 763–64, 767.
  - Robinson, “The Setting of the Gospels,” 10–37
  - Additional background can be found in Huntsman, “Before the Romans,” 272–280
- **Topics**
  - Jewish Background
  - Hellenistic (Greek) Culture
  - Jewish Sects in the First Century BC
  - Advent of Rome
  - Rome and the Herods, Roman Administration