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*Final Exam*

*NT503*

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1. Why is it important to understand historical-critical issues, such as authorship, recipients, and dating (even if we cannot determine these details definitively)? **1 to 2 paragraphs.**

It is important to understand historical- critical issues because helps it us to know who the text was originally written to. When that is understood, it gives the hearers a better understanding of who the story or the information is about. If Matthew was the author of Matthew, his familiarity with the Jewish culture would give him credibility on the subject matter, he was writing. This may not necessarily mean the author was Jewish, but it does mean that he had spent enough time in that culture, or area to be able to connect this message to that context. For the people living in the 1st

century, they would readily have a grasp of what was being said.

Date is also important because it allows the reader to know what was happening at the time of the writing. Maybe Christians were suffering persecution at the time in Rome, or another city, the gospel would be written to reflect the time so that the readers may know what circumstances where at play when the information was written or spoken.

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1. Present a well-reasoned argument for your ministry context as to what is significant for people's faith and interpretation of a Gospel for spiritual growth about the phenomenon that the Church has 4 canonical gospels? **1 paragraph**

It is true that there are 4 canonized gospels, and that may raise many questions. These gospels were written from the perspective of the person who wrote them. For example, Matthew who we think had direct contact with Jesus was able to write to his audience in a context that they would understand, which is why he used some many Jewish references. Luke who was potentially writing to a new gentile convert wrote his story in a way that would speak to someone who had very little knowledge of who Jesus was. (Although Luke himself was not one of the 12) but his association with Paul and Peter gave him credibility. That gave him credibility because both Peter and Paul had contact with Jesus, though for Paul was post Jesus' dead and resurrection. However, what is important about the canonical gospel is not that they are four or that they seem to have conflicting information, but that they meet the essential criteria which can be found in all four books, "they contained the holy words of Jesus". Jesus is seen as the authority throughout the gospels, and that is what is central to the Christian faith.

1. When reading the letters of Paul, one must consider the relationship between the Church's context (the recipients) and the argument Paul makes in a specific letter.
  - a. Explain the reason why this is an essential step in reading Paul's different letters with competence. **1 paragraph.**

Paul wrote to different churches, and individuals at different times who were facing different hardships whether by the society they lived in or by members in the church that chose to live

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otherworldly or were buying into the thought process of that day. He also wrote to those who may be taking over pastoral leadership. For example, when Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church, part of the issue they were facing was about Parousia- the second coming- and if it had already happened. False teaching crept into the church, and Paul wrote a letter to the church to address that issue. In other letters some of the churches faced persecution. While in prison, Paul was able to give perspective and encouragement to the churches by sharing with them out of his own pain. (Prison letters). If we are not aware we will put undue yokes upon people in the 21st century, ( legalism )who are not privy to the same issues as they are back then.

- a. Focusing on Galatians, discuss the relationship between the context and the theological points emphasized. Be sure to be specific about the context and explain why these theological issues best addressed them. **1 to 2 paragraphs.**

The Galatians were facing a theological conflict with what following Christ looked like from a Jewish perspective. The thought process was for gentiles to really be Christians, they needed to be circumcised and follow the law of the Torah. They were often left out of the Eucharist, or community meals, even though it was to be done within the community. Paul addressed some of the policies and the actual holes in them. “Let the gentiles who become Christians live as gentile.” Paul argued that this policy was hypocritical because the result is trying to force the gentiles to live like Jews. Along with that policy comes with gentiles sitting at separate tables. They are marginalizing the gentiles when that happens, since they are the dominant group. These theological issues best addressed this community because they have a mixed-race people. If the Jews where dominant, they already have a theology that states that salvation is from the Jews. They look on their laws, their dietary way of living, and the Torah as the way. In a situation like

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this it is important to remind them “justification is by faith, and grace, not dependent upon your background. What God did on the cross has moved that line of demarcation- (there is no Jew and Gentile). Therefore no one can lay claim to anything-but Jesus. Paul also reminded them that circumcision was only given as a sign of what would be revealed in Jesus Christ.

1. By the end of this course, you should be more aware of the diversity of the New Testament, as well as how the message of each book complements God’s overarching purpose of reconciliation with humanity. Diversity is a hot-button issue today and education is often construed as the domain of elitists, and that includes Seminary educated pastors and teachers. It is important you are clear about the extent and limitations of diversity.

a. Is diversity a problem for interpretation, or do you see a value to these different voices for the proclamation and ministry of the contemporary Church? Explain.

*Remember the unique presentations of the Catholic or General epistles. 1 paragraph.*

In the times that we are living in, I think it is fair to say that with diversity comes problems. I think that there is still a need for different voices as we had in the early church. If we look at the gospels, which many scholars think is so conflicting, because

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they are, since people come from different vantage points. The overarching theme was always the same, Jesus was central to the gospel. In the general epistles, the different authors addressed the general problem that the church may have been facing and gave prescriptions that almost anyone could use. “Count it all joy when you face trial of many kinds”. (James 1:2) That was a general suggestion, that is not a traditional standpoint per se (wisdom literature). If we can focus on the big issues that “everyone is dealing with in this diverse church, we will win some if not many. These epistles were addressed to the churches that were facing hardship or needed to respect authority. In the same way the people in the various churches today, even from different denominations, are facing the same challenges. If Jesus remains the central point of issues being addressed, and if what is being addressed leads back to the central person of Christ, then we can see positive responses.

With other means of hearing messages on the rise, such as social media platforms, there can also be different voices that can lead people in the wrong direction, as we also saw in the early church, with the different belief systems that were around. Nevertheless, I still think it’s a value to have different voices because every voice won’t be wrong, and we miss the opportunity to pass on the message if we allow endless possibilities to stop us.

- a. Describe what steps you would take if an interpretation on a passage of Scripture was not the same as yours, and what you would do if a commentary or denomination challenged what you have always understood. **1 paragraph.** *This question goes to method more than content, which is a graduate level focus of*

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*critical thinking. It helps to think about how you would handle an issue ahead of time so that you are prepared to respond wisely and open to the Spirit's guidance (1 Timothy 3:16-17).*

I would concede that it is possible that I could have a wrong interpretation, and if challenged by the denomination or commentary, I would go on a search to understand the origin of the text. I would start with the form criticism to understand the meaning and origin of words. Maybe it had been interpreted from oral to written, and some things may have gotten lost in translation. There was no such thing as systematic theology, so everything was pass down orally at that time. It's just possible that not being part of that community, we may not have the full understanding of what the text means. We can assume based on historical reconstruction to find some of the necessary details we need about when and why it was written, and to what community. I think, however, that it should not be ruled out to ask the Holy spirit for true wisdom, as to how to interpret the passage in the way he wants it to be understood. As is stated in the passage you posted (2 Tim3:16-17 ) inviting the Holy Spirit in the conversation is always a great place to start since all scripture was God inspired, and he can still make it come alive in our own context.

1. **OPTIONAL:** "One thing I would like the professor and/or ATS to know about my experience in this course is: \_\_\_\_\_." This course was very informative. I enjoyed the books that were chosen. I look forward to delving in deeper! Thanks

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