



# NT220 The Reliability of the Gospels

Prof Craig Blomberg | 1.5CR

## About the Course

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At the very heart of the Christian faith is the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The documents from which we learn almost all we know about him are the four New Testament Gospels. But are they historically reliable? How can we know? Were they reliably transmitted and translated?

Do other Gospels besides Matthew, Mark, Luke and John contain trustworthy information about Jesus? Why are Matthew, Mark and Luke so similar to each other and why is John so different from all three of them? Can we believe in the amazing miracles stories they contain, including a virgin birth and resurrection from the dead? These and related questions will be the focus of our investigation.

### Credits

1.5CR

### Fees\*

S\$225(Credit)

S\$120 (Audit)

### Class Format

Online

\* Alumni are entitled to 10% discount on audit course(s)

## About the Lecturer

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**Prof Craig Blomberg** is distinguished professor of the New Testament at Denver Seminary, where he has been teaching since 1986. He has authored, co-authored, and edited numerous books and articles, including full-length commentaries on Matthew, 1 Corinthians, and James; and has been on translation committees for several Bible translations, especially for the New International Version. Topics of interest in his writings include the historical reliability of the Scriptures, wealth and poverty, hermeneutics, and the parables of Jesus.



## Course Objectives

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Upon completion of the course, it is hoped that the student will:

- Understand the process of the Gospels' composition, transmission, canonization and translation
- Be able to defend the credibility of their miracles, and recognize the nature of ancient biography and historiography
- Gain greater confidence in the reliability of the Gospels

# Course Outline & Resources

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## VIDEO LECTURES & ACTIVITIES

For each topic, the relevant video lectures can be accessed through the video links provided on the course Moodle site. At the end of each set of video lectures, the lecture questions should be answered before proceeding to the next topic.

## REQUIRED READING

All required readings are from Roberts, Mark D. *Can We Trust the Gospels? Investigating the Reliability of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2007. Please see the Course Bibliography below for more details.

S/N	Lecture Topic	Activities	Required Reading
1	Why the Four Gospels?	Lecture 1 Questions	Roberts, <i>Can We Trust the Gospels?</i> Chaps. 1, 15
2	General Issues of Textual Transmission and Translation	Lecture 2 Questions	Roberts, <i>Can We Trust the Gospels?</i> Chap. 2
3	Formation and Composition of the Gospels	Lecture 3 Questions	Roberts, <i>Can We Trust the Gospels?</i> Chaps. 3-4
4	The Oral Tradition and Paul's Letters	Lecture 4 Questions	Roberts, <i>Can We Trust the Gospels?</i> Chaps. 5-6
5	Ancient Biography and History, and John's Distinctives	Lecture 5 Questions	Roberts, <i>Can We Trust the Gospels?</i> Chap. 7-8
6	Harmonising the Gospels	Lecture 6 Questions	Roberts, <i>Can We Trust the Gospels?</i> Chaps. 9-10
7	Archaeology and Non-Christian Testimony	Lecture 7 Questions	Roberts, <i>Can We Trust the Gospels?</i> Chaps. 12-13
8	The Problem of Miracles	Lecture 8 Questions	Roberts, <i>Can We Trust the Gospels?</i> Chaps. 11, 16

## Course Requirements

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1. **Video lecture questions:** Complete all video lecture questions.

2. **Book chapter review:** Write a 1000-word review of the chapter “The Truth of the Gospel” in Watson, Francis, *The Fourfold Gospel: A Theological Reading of the New Testament Portraits of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), pp. 167-188 (available on Moodle). You can consider using the following structure for the review: (a) introduce the thesis of the chapter (10%); (b) summarise its content (40%); (c) evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of its arguments as they relate to the question of the trustworthiness of the Gospels. No citations or bibliography will be needed for this review.
  
3. **Personal reflection essay:** Write a 1000-word personal reflection essay on your reaction to the issue of defending the truth of the Gospels. Do you think this is something people should just believe? Do you think the reliability of Scripture can be proved? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in convincing people of its accuracy? What is the role of evidence or apologetics? Are there approaches to these questions that have made you uneasy in the past but now you realize you should be more open to them? Why or why not? No citations or bibliography will be needed for this essay.
  
4. **Research paper:** Write a 2000-word research paper on any of the topics discussed in the lectures. Please contact the tutor to propose and confirm the topic to be researched. Avoid repeating the information discussed in class but research other material on the topic. Use a range of published sources. Consider researching an area that has been particularly troubling for you in knowing how to handle it. Present arguments both for and against the reliability of the Gospels in whichever area you investigate. Do not merely say you agree with a certain perspective; give reasons for why you find it more persuasive and explain how you would respond to the other side. Citations (footnotes) and a bibliography are expected for this paper.

## ASSIGNMENTS BREAKDOWN

S/N	Assignments	Grade Percentage
1	Video Lecture Questions	10%
2	Book Chapter Review	20%
3	Personal Reflection Essay	20%
4	Research Paper	50%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## GUIDELINES FOR ESSAY-WRITING

1. The paper must reflect graduate-level research skills. There must be a minimum of five sources in your bibliography (not including the Bible).
2. The paper must reflect academic integrity in that due credit must be given to every source quoted or used. Footnotes should be used to document the sources. Every source cited should also appear in the bibliography. Please abide by the Turabian or Chicago Style for all your footnoting and bibliography.
3. The paper must reflect a good command of English and organisation of thought. Writing must be concise and clear. Please proof-read your paper before submitting it.
4. The paper must reflect the customary hallmarks of academic writing: treat those who hold different opinions from you with respect, and avoid colloquialisms and slang.

## COURSE ASSIGNMENT POLICIES

1. For **style and formatting** of assignments, please refer to the section on “General Formatting for all Assignments” available on the BGST Online Student Manual.
2. ALL assignments are to be submitted by uploading via Moodle. Alternatively, assignments can be sent via email to [assignments@bgst.edu.sg](mailto:assignments@bgst.edu.sg) without the need to cc. the lecturer (unless requested by the lecturer).
3. Students must submit all their assignments **6 months** after the course registration date

Students are advised that BGST **strongly discourages plagiarism**. For more information on this point (what plagiarism is, how BGST penalises it), please consult the BGST ‘Guidelines for Academic Papers’.

## Course Bibliography

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### REQUIRED READINGS

*Books available on BGST Overdrive are marked with #*

#### Core Text

\*#Roberts, Mark D. *Can We Trust the Gospels? Investigating the Reliability of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2007.

### RECOMMENDED READINGS

#Bauckham, Richard. *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

Blomberg, Craig L. *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*. Nottingham: Apollos; Downers Grove: IVP, rev. 2007.

Bock, Darrell L. *Who Is Jesus? Linking the Historical Jesus with the Christ of Faith*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012.

#Boyd, Gregory A. and Paul R. Eddy. *The Jesus Legend: A Case for the Reliability of the Synoptic Jesus Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Charlesworth, James H., Brian Rhea and Petr Pokorný, eds. *Jesus Research*, 2 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009-14.

#Evans, Craig A. *Jesus and His World: The Archeological Evidence*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012.

#Porter, Stanley E. *How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, Translation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013.

#van Voorst, Robert. *Jesus outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

For registration, please proceed to [bgst.edu.sg/students-portal/](http://bgst.edu.sg/students-portal/)

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