Overview
Welcome to the “Acts and the Writings of Paul”. This introductory "general education" course in early church history focuses upon the ministry of the Apostle Paul. The course explores the book of Acts and the Pauline epistles in their historical and contextual setting. Designed primarily for distance education, this course provides a means by which persons located away from the traditional college or university classroom can complete a university-level course in early church history. The course focuses students in assigned readings, conceptualization activities, vocabulary building, and upon leading issues. Photo to right is of Raphael’s Acts of the Apostles tapestry.

Course catalog description for this course
Focused in the book of Acts of the Apostles, this course deals with Paul’s life, times, and writings, including the background, purpose, message, and themes of the Pauline epistles; his personal life and character; his companions; and the chronology of the apostle’s life. Emphasis is on the theology of his writings and the issues that Paul dealt with in the apostolic church. Upon completion, students should be able to show the message of Acts and each of each of the Pauline Epistles and their implication and application.

Prerequisites and corequisites
Although there are no Prerequisites or Corequisites for this course, THL135 is strongly recommended.

Course credit
Three (3) semester hours.

Instructional objectives
On completion of this course, a student should be able to:

1. Identify the cultural milieu and the geographical context in which first-century Christianity evolved;
2. Identify and demonstrate the leading issues confronted by the early church, and their resolution, regarding Jewish and Gentile converts to Christianity;
Course Prospectus (THL 136 - Acts and the Writings of Paul)

3. Demonstrate the chronology of the early church in the C.E. 31-70 period, and identify and state the significant chronological markers of the apostolic period;

4. Identify and state the background, purpose, and basic themes of the book of Acts and each of the Pauline epistles;

5. State and demonstrate Paul's teaching on various doctrines and themes throughout all of his epistles, and in particular his views on Christian living;

6. Demonstrate facility in finding, using and properly citing written resources in biblical study, and applying them in a well-reasoned manner;

7. Demonstrate with particularity Paul's background and preparation for his unique responsibility as the apostle to the Gentiles through completion of a research paper; and

8. State the definition of basic terms.

Your instructors
The principal lecturer for this team-taught course is senior evangelist Dr. Roderick C. Meredith. Dr. Meredith has taught this course to thousands of students over the span of four decades. His recorded lectures, designed specifically for this online course, help students master the details of early church history with a focus upon the growth and development of the early church and the travels and ministry of the Apostle Paul. He is assisted by Mr. Kenneth L. Frank who serves as the instructor of record. Michelle R. Broussard (LU’s Assistant Registrar) serves as the instructional associate. To contact Mr. Frank or Mrs. Broussard on course details and issues, please use the email feature in the E-Learning system (Populi).

Technology access
This course requires that students have web access and an established email account. The Adobe Acrobat Reader is necessary to view documents that are PDF files. If you do not already have it, you may download the free Adobe Acrobat reader at http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html, which you may then install and use to access PDF documents on this site.

Textbooks
The textbooks for this course are:


and a New King James edition of the Holy Bible.

Recommended supplementary references are:


As a Bible student you will need to consult Bible dictionaries, commentaries, and biblically-related magazine or journal articles for information. When you do this you have to sort out the wheat from the chaff; that is, you must have sufficient grounding in the Bible to sort out the correct from the incorrect, the plausible from the implausible. This is a critical thinking skill which we want you to further develop in this course and in all LU courses.

The textbook we selected, Elwell and Yarbrough’s *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*, is a conservative approach written in an easy to read and well laid out fashion. A word of caution: it is a commercial publication and represents the views and ideas of its authors, editors, and publishers. Living University does not endorse the text, nor vouch for its accuracy; we simply employ it in helping you master the content of the course. There is some material in this book that is helpful, and some that is not. In the setting of this course we want you to not only discern the difference, but to know why there is a difference. Our quest is to help you to “rightly divide the word of God” (2 Tim 2:15 KJV).

Moreover, in daily life and particularly in the life of ministers, you will encounter people who identify with the evangelical thinking of this book’s authors. For example, many if not most Protestants and Roman Catholics believe that the Kingdom of God exists today and equate it with the church or salvation. We hold that Jesus and the Apostles taught primarily that the Kingdom of God was not to come into being until the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Part of a good theological, and biblical, education is coming to understand what others believe and why they believe it. You need to develop sufficient understanding and skills to demonstrate and effectively communicate what the truth of God is in such matters.
Our suggestion is that you take the time to mark the text, correcting errors and underlining helpful points so it can be a useful handbook for you. The paper the publisher selected for this text and its fairly wide margins lend themselves to note taking. We suggest you use a fine point Pilot pen.

**Course requirements and grades**

**Reading and writing exercises**
Refer to each individual Lesson page for reading assignments and the program schedule. Writing exercises can be accessed from each individual Lesson page or from the Assignments tab.

**Discussion Forums**
Each student will have the opportunity to post on-line comments to a Discussion Forum question for each lesson. This will enable students to interact with each other.

**Filing writing assignments**
To turn in writing assignments, click on the Assignments tab and then click on the assignment you want to turn in. On the Assignment Submission page, use the Attach a File feature located below the textbox to upload your WORD document. DO NOT PLACE YOUR ASSIGNMENT IN THE TEXTBOX, as this box is meant for student/instructor communication purposes only.

**Lectures**
This course includes several lectures by Dr. Meredith, and possibly some guests. Links to lectures are on the lesson webpages.

**Quizzes**
Each of the six lessons has an associated online quiz of approximately 20-25 questions. They are open book, but under no circumstances are you to print the quiz. An open book quiz is not a workbook exercise; it is a test where you can consult your notes and books. If you study the material you should rarely have to look up the answers. Students are allowed one hour to complete each quiz. Quizzes are multiple choice and true or false questions. You will be asked to answer questions covering required readings, lectures, and vocabulary words.

**Research paper**
This course requires a term paper. It is a major assignment worth about 20% of a student’s final grade. Two or three students may partner in completing this assignment, or a student may work independently. The following guidelines apply:

*Objective:* To demonstrate an understanding of the cultural conditions and times in which the Apostle Paul received his education and rearing, to become aware of the Apostle Paul’s background and preparation for his unique responsibilities as the Apostle to the Gentiles through literary research, and to succinctly commit this understanding to writing in a formal research paper.
Purpose: To research and explain with particularity Paul’s background and preparation for his unique responsibility as the Apostle to the Gentiles, and to develop facility in finding, using and properly citing written resources in biblical study, and applying them in a well-reasoned manner.

An "A" paper: An "A" level paper will show a careful selection of various works of fairly recent publication worked into your paper in support of the propositions you are making in your writing. More than 12 references is excessive for this assignment. An "A" paper will have 9 - 12 references evenly balanced between scholarly books, Bible reference works, and journals. An "A" paper will develop the topic along at least three lines—his years growing up in Tarsus and the Greco-Roman world, his Jewish culture and his education and training in Judaism, and his early years in the church, with discussion of any interrelationships. An "A" paper presents an organized presentation of the Apostle Paul's early life.

Sources: There is much information available concerning the Apostle Paul. You may find material in a variety of sources, such as Bible commentaries, works on the New Testament, journal articles, and secular and church histories. Do not overlook the New Testament itself as it provides considerable biographical information concerning his youth, family, and career preparation. This is an opportunity for you to use the online resources of the University Library.

Style: Be sure to present a balanced review of the literature dealing with this topic, and properly acknowledge and cite your sources. The research paper will be graded on form and documentation style as well as organization, grammar and content. As applicable, the editorial style should be as set forth in the following work:


Length: This research paper should be from 8-12 pages. Do not exceed twelve (12) typewritten or word processed pages double spaced (excluding a title page) with 10 point Courier or the equivalent, including your Bibliography page(s).

Value: 200 points.

Due date: Late papers will be marked down one (1) letter grade unless there are extenuating circumstances.

Always keep a copy of your work for this course.

Grading
Your course grade will be determined based on the number of points you have earned over the semester as follows:

Icebreaker (30 points)
Short Writing Assignments (five, each worth 60 points, for a total of 300 points)
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Research Paper (200 points)
Discussions Forms (six, each worth 15 points, for a total of 90 points)
Quizzes (six, each worth 60 points, for a total of 360 points) [online, open book]
Course Evaluation (20 points)
TOTAL 1,000 points

Grades are assigned in the traditional American style of an A, B, C, D, or F. In distance learning we believe that mastery of the subject matter is achieved when a student can demonstrate that they have achieved 80% of the objectives for a course. That means that we want you to earn at least 800 points in this course. If you do not do so, then you have not developed the mastery we would like you to have.

We want this course to be competency-based, and so it is possible for the entire class to receive an A or a B. There is no artificial curving of scores in the assignment of grades. Also, don’t go on a guilt trip if you get a C; that is an honorable grade. If you receive a D or below, then you might want to retake this course. Mastery of the material is what your goal should be.

Grades are assigned by points as follows:

A 900-1000 points
B 800-899 points
C 700-799 points
D 600-699 points
F Below 600 points

Course calendar
All reading and viewing assignments are set forth in the lessons on the course website.

Lesson 1 The Beginning of the Church of God

Writing Assignment 1
Discussion Forum 1
Quiz 1

Lesson 2 The Gospel, Barnabas and Paul

Writing Assignment 2
Discussion Forum 2
Quiz 2

Lesson 3 First Apostolic Tour - Acts 15 Conference

Writing Assignment 3
Lesson 4 The Second and Third Apostolic Tours

Writing Assignment 4
Discussion Forum 4
Quiz 4

Lesson 5 Arrest and Confinement at Caesarea, C.E. ca. 57-59

Research Paper
Discussion Forum 5
Quiz 5

*Your research paper will be considered “late” if it not received by the due date.*

Lesson 6 Detention in Rome and Paul's Final Ministry, C.E. 60-68

Writing Assignment 6
Discussion Forum 6
Quiz 6

*Please complete the Course Evaluation by the end of the semester.*