

Fall 2021 Adult Study:

Orthodox Christian Faith and Practice

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With Fr. Andrew Andrews as In-class Resource

Wednesdays: 7:15 to 8:30 p.m.
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TEXT: Hopko, Father Thomas. The Orthodox Faith. Four volumes. Revised and expanded by David C. Ford.

Zoom Link to Join: <https://tinyurl.com/SNC-O101-2021>

Zoom Video Recording and Outline Texts located at: www.stnicholasla.com/adulteducation.

Oct. 13 **The Bible (Vol. I pp. 147-248; new; Vol. III pp. 3-115 old)**

Overview of the Bible and of Salvation History

<https://www.oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/doctrine-scripture/the-bible>

NOTES: The Bible and Salvation History

- What is physically included in the bible?
 - Collection of many books
 - Sacred writings of God’s People of the Old and New Testaments
 - Old: The Jews (also called Hebrews or Israelites depending on time)
 - New: The Christians
- What does it mean to be the “Written word of God”?
 - Didn’t fall from heaven.
 - Wasn’t “dictated by God”
 - God revealed Himself as the true living God to his people and inspired His People to produce **scriptures** (true and genuine expressions of His Truth and His Will for His People and for the world).
- The words of the Bible are human words
 - Inspired by God
 - Contain all the marks of those who wrote them (reflecting the time and culture in which they were written).
 - On the whole, even within our human limitations to understand and transcribe what was revealed, the Bible remains the very Word of God.
 - Origin is with God, not man.
 - God willed its inspiration and creation.
- As inspired Word of God, the Orthodox Church sates the bible contains no formal errors or inner contradictions concerning the relationship between God and the world.
 - There may be inaccuracies of a non-essential character
 - Spiritual and doctrinal message of God remains consistent, authentic and true.
- Authorship
 - Many authors. Not always the person named as author.
 - The Church doesn’t focus on needing to know for certain who was the “author” of each book, as God is the inspiration for all of it, so the human authorship is incidental to the proper understanding.

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- Interpretation
 - The bible lives in the Church.
 - It can only be understood in the context of the total life and experience of the community of faith.
 - *First of all you must understand that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Peter 1:20)*
 - Scholars, archeologists, and historians offer much insight, but the bible can not be interpreted based upon academic disciplines alone.
 - The right understanding of scripture comes from Christ, the living and personal Word of God.
 - *No one has ever seen God; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known (John 1:18)*
 - *And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:27)*
 - *Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures (Luke 24:45)*
- Old Testament
 - The Law (Pentateuch – meaning five books). Books of Moses.
 - Time Period
 - Pre-history (creation up until Abraham)
 - Abraham to the death of Moses (approx. 2000-1200BC)
 - Creation of the World
 - Fall of Adam and Eve and the sinful history of the children of Adam
 - God's promise of salvation to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
 - The twelve tribes (the families of Jacob)
 - The Exodus from Egypt by Moses.
 - The laws concerning priestly and ritual offices (Leviticus)
 - Numbers lists a census of the people and continues the history of the Hebrews in the wilderness
 - Deuteronomy recounts the law again (the meaning is second law) and the death of Moses
 - The History (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, First – Fourth Kingdoms), Tobit, Judith, Esther, Maccabees (the last four not being found in the Protestant Bible)
 - Wisdom (Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Sirach)
 - Prophecy (sometimes divided by “Greater and Lesser” prophets)
 - Prophets (and Judges) came into being when the people turned against God (worshiped other gods or built temples to other gods). Prophets gave the inspired Word of God to the people. Often calling them to repent of their practices and often times predicting that which is to come in the future. Many of the prophets spoke of the coming of the Messiah and it is Christ who fulfills these prophecies.
 - Most prophets were killed (Isaiah sawn in two, Jerimiah was stoned, Ezekiel was quartered) because they were telling the people what they didn't want to hear.
- New Testament
 - Four Gospels
 - Matthew
 - Written Most likely after AD 70.
 - Theme: Christ, the Incarnate God, Immanuel, has inaugurated the kingdom of God and the new covenant, which is realized in the true Israel, the Church.
 - Mark
 - Written before AD 70.
 - Theme: Jesus Christ as Servant and Sacrifice.

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- Luke
 - Written between AD 70-80.
 - Theme: The universality of the gospel message. Written for Gentile Christians and emphasizing the challenge toward evangelization.
- John
 - Written approximately AD 96.
 - Theme: The eternal Son of God has come in the flesh and that believing you may have life in His name.
- Acts
 - Written by Luke in approximately AD 75-85.
 - Theme: The spread of the gospel by the apostles from Jerusalem to the whole world.
- Epistles of St. Paul
 - Romans
 - Written AD 55-57 while in Corinth
 - Theme: God's righteousness revealed in Christ for our salvation, salvation through Christ apart from the Mosaic Law, new life through baptism and chrismation, Christian life in the Church and in the world
 - I Corinthians
 - Written AD 55 while in Ephesus
 - Theme: Communion with God versus communion with darkness
 - II Corinthians
 - Written AD 55 while in Macedonia
 - Theme: Reconciliation and communion, communion of the saints, apostleship in the Church, unity of the Church, the Church and the world
 - Galatians
 - Date unknown, as no references are made to places or times
 - Theme: The true gospel (the grace of Christ) versus the false gospel (salvation through the Mosaic law).
 - Ephesians
 - Written AD 61-63 while in Rome
 - Theme: The riches of Christ in the Church, the body of Christ is the center and life of all, the work of the Holy Trinity in our salvation
 - Philippians
 - Written AD 61-63 while in Rome
 - Theme: The dynamic of our life in Christ, an ongoing experience and not a merely personal one (shared among believers)
 - Colossians
 - Written AD 61-63 while in Rome
 - Theme: Living by the will of God versus dying by false human schemes
 - I Thessalonians
 - Written AD 50-51 while in Corinth
 - Theme: A holy life leads to eternal life, walk worthy of God's calling, stand fast in the faith, maintain moral purity.
 - II Thessalonians
 - Written AD 51 while in Corinth
 - Theme: Stand fast by means of apostolic teaching

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- I Timothy
 - Written AD 64-65 probably from Macedonia
 - Theme: Pastoral care of the faithful, how the Church is run relates to both apostolic doctrine and worship.
- II Timothy
 - Written AD 65-67
 - Theme: Overcoming hardship in ministry.
- Titus
 - Written AD 63-65
 - Theme: Overseeing the Church according to the true faith and how to face down heresies
- Philemon
 - Written AD 61-63 while in Rome
 - Theme: No longer slaves, we are brothers and sisters in Christ
- Hebrews
 - Written AD 70
 - Theme: Persevering faith in the incarnate Son. Jesus is superior to the prophets, angels, Moses and Aaron. In his worship we enter heaven, therefore we must faithfully hold fast to him.
- General Epistles
 - James
 - Written AD 55-60
 - Theme: Harmony of faith and works
 - I Peter
 - Written AD 50-67 in Rome
 - Theme: Rejoice in sharing the sufferings of Christ
 - II Peter
 - Written AD 63-67 in Rome
 - Theme: True knowledge versus false knowledge. Maintain the apostolic doctrine. Grow continually in holiness and virtue.
 - I John
 - Written AD 90-95
 - Theme: Tests of true Christian life. Christ reveals the light and life of the Father. The reality of baptism, chrismation and Eucharist.
 - II John
 - Written AD 90-95
 - Theme: Tests of true Christian care. The love of our Incarnate God brings promised victory over the antichrist.
 - III John
 - Written AD 90-95
 - Theme: Genuine leadership vs false leadership. Preserve the true faith that has been received and respect those who pass it on to us.
 - Jude
 - Written AD 60-80
 - Theme: Contending earnestly for the faith especially against false teachers.
- Revelation
 - Written AD 81-96 by St John the Evangelist while on Patmos
 - Theme: Faithfulness in tribulation.
 - Meaning: Uncovering of something that has previously been hidden (the final triumph of the kingdom of God)

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- Salvation History
 - Word and Spirit
 - God acts towards the world through His Word and His Spirit
 - The Word of God became man as Jesus of Nazareth
 - The Holy Spirit of God comes personally to men from the Father through Jesus Christ to those who believe and who belong to Christ through faith and repentance and baptism in His Church.
 - The entire creation, the salvation and glorification of the world (Salvation History) depends on God and His Word and His Spirit (a.k.a. the Trinity).
 - Pre-History
 - The story of Creation (God's absolute sovereignty over all things that exist)
 - The story of man's sin against God and his brother man
 - The original counter-symbol of salvation in Christ (Christ is the True Adam).
 - The original Adam was merely "a type of him who was to come" (Romans 5:14).
 - "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor 15:21).
 - Abraham
 - The establishment of the covenant of salvation between God and His people.
 - The perfect priesthood of Christ is also prefigured in Abraham's life.
 - The Passover
 - The last curse upon Egypt where the blood of the lamb placed on the doorways of the Hebrews would cause the angel of death to pass over their houses.
 - Prefigures Christ as the Lamb of God whose blood is spilled conquering death
 - Kingship
 - Israel wanted a king, even though God told them it was a bad idea
 - Saul became demented.
 - David committed many sins but was still beloved of God and a good king.
 - Solomon started out asking for Wisdom and build the temple but was corrupted by his many wives to worship the gods of their people.
 - All other kings were measured by whether they worshiped other gods and whether they actively tried to destroy temples to other gods. Most kings were bad kings. Some were OK (they didn't worship other gods, but didn't try to take down the other god's temples) and a very few were good.
 - Reality: God was right: He alone is the True Shepherd of His People. He alone is the One Who rules and Who is to be served and obeyed.
 - Prophecy
 - Concerning the history and destiny of the people of Israel and the whole human race
 - Usually told what God would do in response to the wickedness and unfaithfulness of His people.
 - Foretold the ultimate mercy and forgiveness of God who is faithful to his promises, will not be angry forever, and who restores His People to bring all nations to His everlasting Kingdom (by sending His Son as the Messiah of Israel).