

Week Five

YEAR ONE

Read

"The Priestly Creation Story" essay provided in Part II, pages 36-40.

Focus

Identify and become familiar with pronunciation: covenant; Baals, cult; Sabbath, *ex nihilo*; Zoroastrianism; Manichaeism; dualism; Plato; Neo-Platonic; *via negativa*

"The Priestly Creation Story," consisting of only ten verses in Genesis, poetically presents a full doctrine of creation. It also offers a doctrine of God. A guided study of the story draws out the meaning contained in this ancient poem. The story shows God as wholly Other yet present to creation. God transcends all that is, thereby providing a corrective to all forms of dualism. Many theological difficulties get untangled by the implications in the story.

YEAR TWO

Read

The Gospel according to Matthew (*Try to set aside enough time to read this gospel in one or two sittings.*)

Focus

Identify terms or references that you had to look up.

The Gospel writers tell the story of the Good News of God in Christ. The Gospel in its entirety communicates the story. However, seldom do people hear the entire story, rather they experience the Scripture verse by verse or in short pieces they hear within worship. Such reading is like watching a trailer of a film and believing you have seen the movie. Individual scenes make little or no sense without the context of the story. So too it is important to know the entire Gospel, allowing you to experience its drama. Once you have a sense of Matthew's story, you are positioned better to interpret individual scenes, teachings, and events.

YEAR THREE

Read

MacCulloch, Chapter 3, "A Crucified Messiah," pages 77-111

Focus

Points to note: cluster of words (*evaggelion, evangelium, Gospel*); Julius Africanus; *epiousios*; parables; *abba*; *Kyrios*<N>"Jesus is Lord, the word for God"; Paul of Tarsus; *epistole*; Paul's use of the word "church"; Johannine Christ; Jewish revolt and fall of Jerusalem

Change in the eastern region of the Roman Empire eventually upset the Roman Empire's social order. The history of Christianity began with seemingly insignificant events. The importance of those events became clear through the lenses of experience and hindsight.

YEAR FOUR

Read

Allen, Chapter 2, "Holiness for Today," pages 19-27

Focus

Compare Isaiah's vision of God with Moses's encounter with God. Identify Simone Weil; Jean Vanier; absolute value.

State in your own words the justification of the claim that "human beings are significant, have dignity, and have absolute value." (27)

Respond

Identify how or where you have evidence in recent years of debates between authority and revelation. Think more broadly than within faith communities.

How has your life experience helped you in matters of authority, whether related to the church or to politics or to culture (e.g. family, community, or nation)?

Practice

Change disrupts continuity. New ways of speaking and even newer ways of behaving create unrest. Yet, without continuity change evaporates into nothingness. Society's reordering of itself after chaotic change provides the stuff of history.

Find evidence in news stories or other circumstances of changes that are challenging continuity. Practice listening for the voices on both sides of such a challenge—those embracing change and those advocating "holding true" to what has been. What do you discover when you listen for those voices?

What opportunities for ministry are there in the midst of such challenges?