

Diakonos

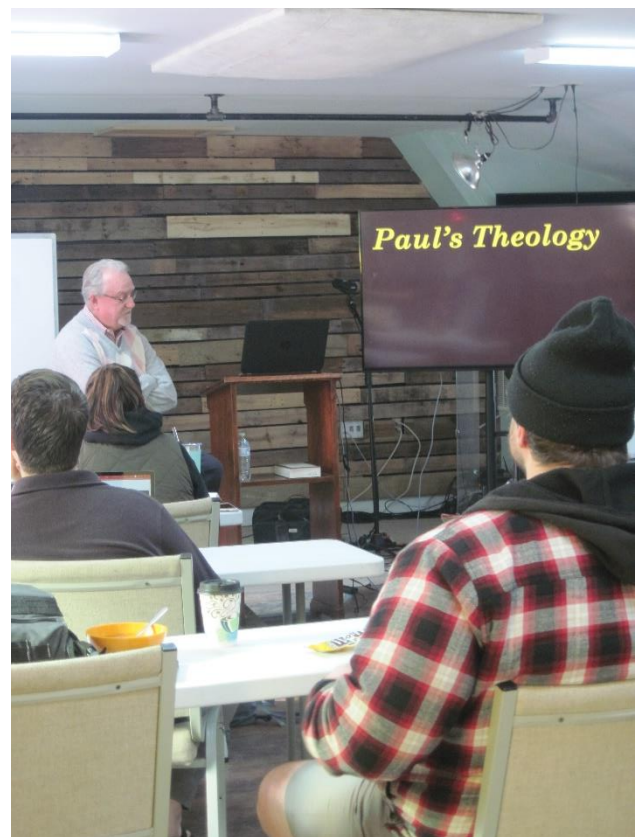
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February 2021

Dear Friends and Supporters,

December, the season of Advent, brought the opportunity to lecture in person at the University of the Nations campus in Richmond, Virginia. I was delighted to do so, not only because Peggy and I would be able to “get out of town” for a change, but also because we have a son, daughter-in-law, and three grandchildren in the Richmond area. We drove rather than flew (which was probably safer, given our present pandemic), but driving also meant that we would have a car available. Often, especially in other countries, I am more-or-less confined to the campus and whatever may be within reasonable walking distance unless there is public transportation nearby. Once we crossed the state line leaving Michigan’s lockdown, we actually were able to have breakfast at a Bob Evans in Ohio. The drive through western Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Maryland was lovely.

My lectures covered a section of the curriculum fondly dubbed “Paul Week,” five days of lecture on the life, writings and theology of the great missionary-apostle. Most of my students this time were



Part of the lecture series included the theological themes peculiar to St. Paul.

Americans, though I also had one young woman from Uzbekistan. Also, interesting, one of my students was from an Amish background, her parents having moved away from the Amish community, so there were several aspects of Paul's theology



that were of special interest to her, not the least of which was what Paul said about women's hair-coverings. (The Amish, you may know, require that women wear a head covering based upon what they think Paul meant in 1 Corinthians 11, a passage that I believe they misread.)

Peggy and I stayed in a delightful little cottage on the campus in Richmond, and as you can see, autumn was still in progress in early December with nice color.

After I explained Greco-Roman customs for married women's hair-coverings in the 1st Century—more or less the equivalent of the modern wedding ring—she was quite delighted to discover a better reading of this NT passage. Unlike several of my recent lecture outings, this one was in English with no need for translation, so it was smoother than usual.



Since it was Advent, I brought my instrument and began each day's lecture with a guitar Christmas carol.

Back home meant back to Zoom. In mid-December, I lectured on the Old Testament poetical book, the Song of Songs (Canticles) for a group of students at Cambridge, England. This was the same School of Biblical Studies for which I lectured earlier in the year and a most delightful group of students! Believe me, lecturing on the Song to a group of university co-eds can be a bit tricky, but I think it went pretty well!



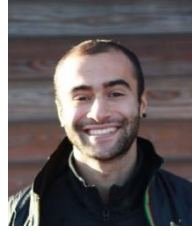
*Victoria
USA*



*Isabella
Austria*



*Noemi
Switzerland*



*Arman
Norway*



*Kelli
USA*



*Kenneth
Nigeria*



*Alex
Mexico*



*Elizabeth
USA*



*Simon
United Kingdom*



*Ben
USA*



*Michael
USA*

*Here are
some faces
from my
Cambridge
group.*

I also lectured to this same group in February, covering the Book of Ezekiel.

Between Zoom lectures, I also picked up another Greek language student, Dave from France (I'm not offering any surnames for the sake of identity protection). Dave is on the front end of working his way through the grammar of the Greek New Testament, while Botros, my Egyptian student (but living in Australia), has just completed the Basic Grammar course and now has begun Advanced Greek. He's currently "sweating it out" translating some of the New Testament material from John. In addition, I now have another Hebrew student, Jennie, who is currently serving as the Youth Director at St. George's Anglican Church in Barcelona, Spain. Jennie, a Brit by nationality, already is fluent in English, French and Spanish, so she is adding biblical Hebrew to her linguistic repertoire. These students are studying through the University of the Nations on-line, which is located in England.

In January, Peggy and I were scheduled to be in Nepal, but as with so many other trips, this lecture series had to surrender to Zoom. (We were quite disappointed, since it might have been our only chance to see the Himalayas!) These lectures were on Israel's Tribal League and included an introduction to the Psalms and Hebrew poetry. Because of the time zone differences, my lectures were from 8:45

PM until 12:30 AM (not my best time of day), which meant that for the students it was the next morning starting at 7:00 AM.



Here are my Nepalese students, and faintly, you can see my face on the screen in this posed classroom shot.

In mid-February, my final lecture for the winter was for U. of N. students in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. This was a delightful bunch of Europeans, mostly Dutch, but with a few others as well. Here, I covered the Book of Joshua, which has its share of technical challenges archaeologically, historically, and theologically.



This is the School of Biblical Studies in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Though I have been to this campus previously, this year all the lectures were on-line using Zoom.

Archaeologically, the issues concerned dating and destruction layers discovered in excavation. Historically, the issues concern the paucity of evidence for the exodus and the various models for the emergence of Israel in the land of Canaan. Theologically, the issues were about divine violence and the extermination of Canaanite populations. Obviously, all these are sensitive subjects,

particularly for Christians in our early 21st century world, where post-modern

skepticism and the negative assessment of any kind of violence in the Bible are the norm. We had some very stimulating discussions, and even though these lectures were via Zoom, the sessions were lively, engaging, and irenic.



Annelyne & Laurens, the Netherlands



Matilda, Sweden



Evert-Floor, the Netherlands



David, USA



Dan, USA



Linda, the Netherlands



Ingrid, Mexico



Amy, the Netherlands



Brenda, the Netherlands



Dian, the Netherlands



Dakota, USA



Robyn, Scotland



Georgia, Canada



Silvia, the Netherlands



Bridget, Canada



Daniel, Chile

What an engaging group of students! It was an absolute pleasure to teach them, listen to their thoughts, and interact with them in their study of the Bible.

So, there you have it for the bleak mid-winter. The spring will see me in Hawaii at two campuses, one in Honolulu and one in Kona, where I will be covering Isaiah, Romans and the Johannine literature. God's blessings to you all!

Dan and Peggy Lewis