

Examples of Thesis Statements in Student Papers from Previous Years

(NB: The thesis statements are in bold print.)

- (1) **An excellent thesis at the end of a longer paragraph:** The New Testament has four gospel stories, including the Gospel according to Mark and the Gospel according to John. Although both of these gospels are written about Jesus of Nazareth, both their contents and their messages differ greatly. In order to grasp the meanings of scripture, it is necessary to examine both the inner texture, the texture which lies within the text itself, and intertexture, how the text represents “the world” outside of the text (Robbins 1996: 36, 41). An example of why this analysis is so imperative arises when comparing Mark 11:27-33 and John 7:14-18. Upon a first reading, these two passages from the New Testament may appear to be similar due to Jesus’ response to the questioning of him by Judeans in both accounts, but upon closer analysis, their structures and meanings vary drastically. **Through analysis of inner texture, specifically opening-middle-closing, repetitive, progressive, and narrational texture, as well as intertexture, it will be shown that the Markan version, although it may look at first like it is an exchange of wisdom, is really a prophetic encounter. In turn, the version in John blends precreation and wisdom belief systems.**
- (2) **An excellent thesis in an excellent sequence of sentences:** Paul explains and justifies his doctrine of justification by faith in Galatians 3:6-18 and Romans 4:16-25. **While both the Galatians passage and the Romans passage seek to show justification for how the Gentiles can be saved by faith in God, the Galatians passage uses more extensive argumentative reasoning based on an examination of Mosaic law, while the Romans passage ignores Mosaic law and focuses on telling the story of Abraham’s faith.** Both sections of the New Testament have ties to the Hebrew Bible and other similarities between them. However, the most significant difference between the two is found in how they explain and defend the doctrine of justification by faith. Analyzing and interpreting the intertexture in the passages with the Hebrew Bible reveals this significant difference.

- (3) **A longer, excellent thesis statement:** *Infancy James* 14 depicts a scene where Joseph is struggling to decide what to do with the pregnant Mary. **Similar to the scene in Matthew 1:18-25, *Infancy James* is a recitation and recontextualization of the Matthean account.**¹ This is evident not only in the shared language and structure of the passages but also in their similar treatments of Mary. Despite his use of Matthew as a source, the author of *Infancy James* does not copy the text verbatim. On the contrary, at times the author makes radical and awkward departures from Matthew in order to remain consistent with the rest of *Infancy James*. **Although the bulk of his story comes from Matthew, the author of *Infancy James* has different focuses from his canonical source. While Matthew is preoccupied with tying the scene to prophecy, the inner texture of *Infancy James* is structured to emphasize both Joseph's decision-making process and the need to answer a central question: What will Joseph do with Mary?**
- (4) **A thesis focused on one unit in the context of an overall New Testament writing:** The book of Acts is one of only a couple of books in the New Testament that focuses on Christianity's shift from Jewish origins to a Gentile mission. A continuation of the Gospel of Luke, it provides a look at the spread of Christianity across the Mediterranean, from Syria to Asia Minor to Greece, and, finally, to Rome. **Using the techniques of opening-middle-closing texture, intertexture, and repetition, it will be shown how, through both wisdom and prophetic rhetorolect, Acts 13:44-52 illustrates one of the overarching themes of Acts – the transition of Christianity from a story blended with the Hebrew Bible to a solely Christian story.**
- (5) **An excellent, longer thesis at the end of a paragraph:** In the New Testament there are thirteen letters attributed to the apostle Paul, which include 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians. Paul wrote these letters after his conversion to Christianity following Jesus' appearance to him on the road to Emmaus. Prior to Paul's conversion he was a Pharisee who persecuted Christians, but Paul is largely responsible for expanding Christianity beyond a Jewish sect to a world religion which included Gentiles (Harris, 320). The first letter of Paul to the Thessalonians was composed around 50 CE and is the oldest

¹ For recitation and recontextualization, see Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Text: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996) 41-50; *idem*, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (London/New York: Routledge, 1996) 102-107, 121-24.

surviving Christian document. The first letter of Paul to the Corinthians was written in the early 50's CE. Both of these letters address the topic of the Second Coming, or Parousia, but Paul discusses the topic from different viewpoints, and with divergent beliefs. **Through the analysis of inner texture, intertexture and sacred texture, it will be shown that although both 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-57 utilize the apocalyptic belief system, Paul's beliefs and message in 1 Corinthians have matured and are more developed. Whereas Paul primarily gives believers information in a story-like fashion about what will happen at the end time in 1 Thessalonians, he presents an advanced philosophical argument in 1 Corinthians that emphasizes the transformation of the perishable, mortal body into an imperishable, immortal one that can dwell forever with the Lord.**