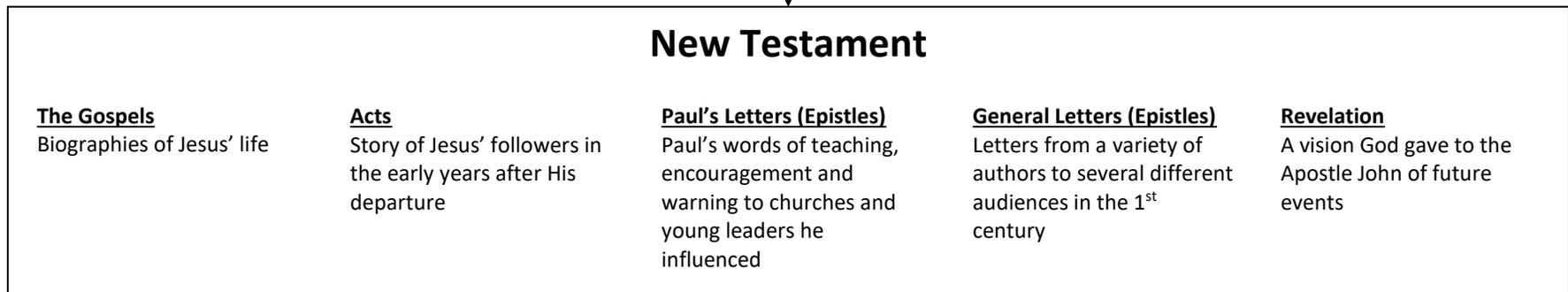
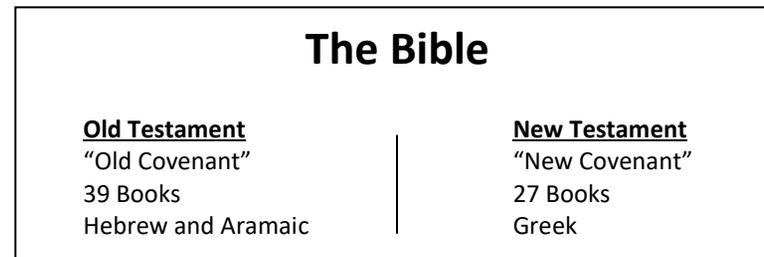




Core Belief

“The Bible is God’s perfect (complete) Word to all peoples at all times”



The Gospels

Notes

Matthew – Written by Matthew (a Jewish tax collector) in the 70-80s A.D., soon after the destruction of the temple. Matthew was written to Jewish Christians and/or Jews considering faith in Christ.

- Theme: Jesus is the King of the Jews
- The “Kingdom of God”
- There are 129 references or allusions to 25 of the 39 Old Testament books!
- Key verses: Sermon on the Mount (chs. 5-7), 7 Woes to the Pharisees (ch. 23)

Mark – Written by John Mark (who was close to Peter) between 65-70 A.D. to Gentile Christians in Rome who were suffering persecution.

- Theme: Jesus is the “Suffering servant of God.”
- Overall structure in 4 sections: 1. The Servant’s Ministry in Galilee (1-9) 2. The Servant’s Journey to Jerusalem (10) 3. The Servant’s Last Week of Ministry (11-15) 4. The Servant’s Victory (16)
- Almost half of his Gospel is devoted to events in the last week of Jesus’ life.

Luke – Written by Luke (a Gentile physician, historian, and companion of Paul) in the 70s or 80s A.D. to Theophilus, primarily for Gentile Christians.

- Theme: Jesus is the perfect “Son of Man” who brings salvation to both Jews and Gentiles.
- See how the overall structure leads geographically toward Jerusalem: from Galilee, to Judea, to Perea, to Jerusalem.
- Synoptic Gospels

John – Written by John, the “disciple whom Jesus loved” sometime between 70-90 A.D. to the world.

- Primary theme: Jesus is the eternal “Son of God.”
- Note the seven “I AM” statements of Jesus: the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Door of the Sheep, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and the True Vine.
- John highlights the Incarnation, using seven “signs” to demonstrate the deity of Christ: Changing water to wine, Healing the nobleman’s son, Healing the paralytic, Feeding the 5000, Calming the storm, Healing the blind man (9:1-7), and Raising of Lazarus (11:38-45).

The Book of Acts

Notes

Acts – Continuation (part 2) of The Gospel of Luke; it tells the story of the early Church following Jesus' departure to Heaven; major events – Christ's departure (Acts 1) and the arrival of the promised Holy Spirit (Acts 2); key verse – Acts 1.8 ... *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

- Acts 1-7 – the church in Jerusalem
- Acts 8-12 – the church expands to Judea and Samaria (major cultural barriers) because of persecution
- Acts 13-27 – the church intentionally begins to take the Jesus story to the rest of the world (Not finished yet ... still 1.8 billion people with little access to the Jesus story!!!)

Note – the stories and events in Acts cover a lot of the timeframe that the rest of the New Testament was written during

Paul's Letters (Epistles)

Notes

Romans – The most in-depth theological/doctrinal book of the New Testament;

- Major teachings – Man's sin/rejection of God; the punishment for man's sin; God's offer of forgiveness through faith ... not works; "Salvation" (one-time change) and "sanctification" (ongoing, life-long change process); our future perfection with God forever; God's missional passion and Paul's commitment to share the Jesus story with all people; God's interactions with the Jewish people and the Church

1 and 2 Corinthians – Written to an extremely spiritually immature church

- Dealt with – Leadership conflicts; sexual sin; God's design for sex in marriage; spiritual gifts and the Church as "the Body of Christ"; financial generosity (2 Corinthians 8-9); love (1 Corinthians 13); our mission as Jesus-followers to be His messengers; the Lord's Supper

Galatians – Core issue was "legalism"

- They embraced Christ through faith but were trying to continue the Jesus journey through their own efforts and works
- Key verses ...
 - Galatians 2.16 – *For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law. (salvation)*
 - Galatians 3.2-3 – *You received the Spirit because you believed the message you heard about Christ. How foolish can you be? After starting your Christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort? (sanctification)*

Ephesians – some overlapping content with Philippians and Colossians

- Major concepts – God's choice of us; unity in the Church; spiritual gifts; relationships in the home and at work (Ephesians 5); the Armor of God (Ephesians 6)
- Famous passage – Ephesians 2.8-10 ... *God saved you by His grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done; so none of us can boast about*

it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Philippians

- Major themes – joy in Christ; living with the humility Jesus displayed; striving hard to finish the Christian life well; generosity and God's promises to provide
- Famous passages
 - Philippians 3.7-8 ... *I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.*
 - Philippians 3.12-14 ... *I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.*

Colossians – major themes/Scriptures ...

- The incredible nature and superiority of Christ – Colossians 1.15-20 ... *Everything was created through Him and for Him.*
- Uselessness of laws and rules to change us ... instead, Paul gives a three-step process for “sanctification” (heart, mind, and body) – Colossians 2-3
- Same relationship concepts found in Ephesians 5-6

1 and 2 Thessalonians – major themes include living to please God; the hope of the Resurrection; and the 2nd coming of Christ

1 and 2 Timothy – written to a young pastor that Paul considered his “son” in the Christian faith

- Includes instructions about ... worship gatherings; requirements and responsibilities of church leaders (elders and deacons); warnings about false teachers; exercising the gifts and calling God has given us
- Well-known passage – *2 Timothy 4.2-4 ... Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching. For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. ⁴ They will reject the truth and chase after myths.*

Titus – another letter by Paul to a young man he mentored; emphasis is on selecting qualified leaders (elders) to lead the church and on the importance of sound teaching that accurately communicates truth

Philemon – short book intended to help resolve a conflict between two Christians; emphasizes our connectedness through Christ and the importance of love, forgiveness and unity in the Church

The General Letters

Notes

Hebrews - Most likely written to Jewish Christians facing persecution.

- Primary theme: the superiority of Jesus Christ (“better” and “perfect”)
- The message of Hebrews revolves around five exhortations: Let us not drift from the Word (2:1-4), Let us not doubt the Word (3:7-4:13), Let us not grow dull toward the Word (5:11-6:20), Let us not despise the Word (10:26-39), Let us not disobey the Word (12:14-19).
- Overall structure: A Superior Person: Christ (1-6), A Superior Priesthood (7-10), A Superior Principle: Faith (11-13)
- See and study the old Testament everywhere in Hebrews!

James - Likely written by James, the brother of Jesus to address the practical implications of true faith – what does Christianity look like in action?

- Overall structure: Stand with confidence (1). Serve with compassion (2). Speak with care (3). Submit with contrition (4). Share with concern (5).
- See the Old Testament all over James – in 108 verses, there are references or allusions to 22 OT books and at least 15 references or allusions to the teachings of Christ.
- Note the emphasis on social justice (1:9-11, 27; 2:1-13; 4:13-5:6).

1 Peter - Written to the church in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) facing increasing suffering and persecution.

- Theme: the sufficiency of God’s grace, which is used in every chapter (1:2, 10, 13, 2:19-20; 3:7; 4:10; 5:5, 10, 12)
- Overall structure: A call to holy living (1:13-2:10). Living for the sake of a pagan world (2:11-4:11). Walking through suffering as the church (4:12-5:11)

2 Peter - Peter is most likely awaiting execution as he writes this letter.

- Theme: growth in grace and knowledge.
- Overall structure: Grow in His grace (1:1-11). Look forward to His coming (1:12-21). Trust in His judgment (2). Cling to His Word (3).
- Note the explanation of the Bible’s inspiration in 2 Peter 1:19-21.

1 John

- John states five purposes: That we might have fellowship (1:3). That we might have joy (1:4). That we might not sin (2:1-2). That we might overcome error (2:26). That we might have assurance (5:13).
- Primary themes: God is light (1:5). God is love (4:8, 16). God is life (1:1-2; 5:11-13).

2 John - Written to either one local church or an esteemed woman in a local church.

- The church must Guard the doctrine of the Incarnation and avoid false teachers.
- Overall structure: Practicing the truth (1-6). Protecting the truth (7-11).
- Look for words that are repeated over and over again: commandment (14), truth (9), walk, love, teaching, deceivers.

3 John - Shortest book in the Bible. Theme: hospitality in the church.

Jude - Written by Judas, the brother of Jesus.

- Theme: “contend for the faith”
- Twofold purpose: 1) To condemn the practices of the ungodly in the church. 2) To counsel believers to hold fast and contend for the faith.

- See the condemnation of false teachers based on seven Old Testament examples: Israel (5), Fallen angels (6), Sodom and Gomorrah (7), Michael and Moses (8-10), Cain (11), Balaam (11), Korah (11)

Revelation

Revelation – Written by John when he was exiled on Patmos to Christians facing persecution in the first century about the gospel and the future of God’s kingdom.

Notes

- Theme is the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- Look for the Old Testament throughout Revelation: 278 out of 404 verses contain references to the Old Testament!
- Help in understanding the apocalyptic imagery: Remember that the imagery is fantasy. John interprets the most important images. Pay attention to the fixed images throughout the book. See the visions as a whole, not always pressing every detail.
- See the majesty of God in Christ all over Revelation! Throne is used 44 times. King, kingdom, or rule about 37 times. Power and authority about 40 times.

Major New Testament Themes

Notes

Jesus – He is without question the central character of the New Testament; the Bible presents Him as the “only begotten Son of God”; He was the One that God created everything through (John 1); He is the ultimate revelation of God (Hebrews 1); He was/is both fully God and fully man; He lived a perfect life, died a death on the cross that we deserved, and was resurrected to offer us the hope of life forever; He is the King of Kings and the Lords of Lords and will rule at the right hand (favored position) of His Father over all creation forever.

Law vs. Grace ... Faith vs. Works – This is perhaps the core issue of the New Testament ... how do we enter into a relationship with God (salvation) and continue to experience the life-long change process (sanctification) of becoming more and more like Jesus? Is it based on our works and ability to live up to God’s Law revealed in the Old Testament? Or is it based on God’s grace in response to our faith in Christ alone? The resounding answer of the New Testament is God’s grace and our faith.

Israel and The Church – In the Old Testament, God prepared, preserved and promoted the nation of Israel as His special people and used them to reveal Himself to the world. In the New Testament, God prepares, preserves, and promotes the “Church” as His special people to reveal Himself to the world.

God’s Global Mission – The New Testament is filled with evidence of God’s passion for people from every culture and language group to hear/respond to the Jesus story and be included in His Church. It was Jesus’ last comment to His disciples ... *“I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* (Matthew 28.18-20) and it is one of the most compelling images of the book of Revelation ... *You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals and open it. For you were slaughtered, and your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.* (Revelation 5.9-10)

Connection between the Old and New Testaments

Notes

A Tutor – The Bible says that the Law of the Old Testament was a “tutor” which was designed to show us the way to Christ. The Law wasn’t intended to show us how to be holy. It was intended to show us how impossible it was to be Holy like God. Thus, we would recognize our need for Christ and His perfection to be offered to us.

Foreshadowing (“the movie trailer”) – So many of the concepts, experiences and images of the Old Testament were intended to be pictures of Christ and what God offers us in Christ ... the sacrifices were a picture of the Great Sacrifice in Christ; the Ark that God used to save Noah and his family from the judgment of the flood was a picture of the salvation God offers us in Christ; the physical Sabbath was a picture of the spiritual rest from our useless works that God offers us in Christ; etc. Colossians 2.17 says, *For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ Himself is that reality.*

Question and Answers

Additional Resources

Overview of each book of the Bible – page A44 in the “Abundant Life” Bible