

Introduction To The New Testament

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20:30-31

1. The New Testament is composed of twenty-seven books written by nine different authors, after Christ’s ascension. Based on their literary characteristics, they are often classified into three major groups: A. The historical (five books, the Gospels and Acts) B. The epistles (21 books, Romans through Jude) C. The prophetic (one book, Revelation).

New Testament Books						
History	Letters					Prophecy
Matthew	Paul's				General	Revelation
	Early during missionary journeys	Later after arrest at Jerusalem			James	
Mark	Galatians	First imprisonment	Release	Second imprisonment	Hebrews	
Luke		Colossians	1 Timothy Titus	2 Timothy	Jude	
John	1 Thess. 2 Thess.	Ephesians			1 Peter	
	1 Cor. 2 Cor.	Philemon			2 Peter	
Acts	Romans	Philippians			1 John 2 John 3 John	

2. The Bible is divided into two sections we call the Old Testament and the New Testament, but exactly what does that mean? The Greek word for “testament,” *διαθηκη* (Latin, *testamentum*), means “will, testament, or covenant.” But as used in connection with the New Testament “Covenant” is the best translation. As such, it refers to a new arrangement made by one party into which others could enter if they accepted the covenant. As used of God’s covenants, it designates a new relationship into which men may be received by God. The Old Testament or Covenant is primarily a record of God’s dealings with the Israelites on the basis of the Mosaic Covenant given at Mount Sinai. On the other hand, the New Testament or Covenant (anticipated in [Jeremiah 31:31](#) and instituted by the Lord Jesus, [1 Cor. 11:25](#)), **describes the new arrangement of God with men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation** who will accept salvation on the basis of faith in Christ.
3. The New Testament was written in Greek, the universal language of the day. God was at work preparing the world for a common language to spread this gospel to the world. Greek became a matchless vehicle of communication for clarity and preciseness to proclaim the message of the Savior. As a result, the books of the New Testament were written in the common language of

the day, *Koine* Greek. Alexander the Great, who more than 300 years before the birth of Christ, swept across the ancient world conquering one nation after another. His desire was one world and one language. It was not written in Hebrew or Aramaic, even though all the writers of the New Testament were Jews except for Luke, who was a Gentile. Koine Greek had become the second language of nearly everyone.

4. Collection of the New Testament Books (Canon): This process took about 350 years. In the second century the circulation of books that promoted heresy accentuated the need for distinguishing valid Scripture from other Christian literature. Certain tests were developed to determine which books should be included. 1. Was the book written or approved by an apostle? 2. Were its contents of a spiritual nature? 3. Did it give evidence of being inspired by God? (4) Was it widely received by the churches? Not all of the twenty-seven books that were eventually recognized as canonical were accepted by all the churches in the early centuries, but this does not mean that those that were not immediately or universally accepted were spurious. Letters addressed to individuals (Philemon, 2 and 3 John) would not have been circulated as widely as those sent to churches. The books most disputed were James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Philemon, but ultimately these were included, and the canon was certified at the Council of Carthage in A.D. 397. Although no original copy of any of the writings that comprise the New Testament has survived, there exist more than 4,500 Greek manuscripts of all or part of the text, plus some 8,000 Latin manuscripts and at least 1,000 other versions into which the original books were translated. Careful study and comparison of these many copies has given us an accurate and trustworthy New Testament.
5. The four Gospels (gospel means “good news”) are not an exact chronological history of Christ’s life, even though they are historically accurate. The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are theological interpretations of the life of Christ. They blend some circumstantial facts, with historical stories, with Christ’s teachings and parables, with inspired commentary. They are a mosaic of conversations, characters, events, teachings, and encounters that all revolve around Christ as savior, messianic King, the incarnate Son of God. Even though much of the content in each gospel overlaps, each presentation of Jesus Christ and His kingdom mandate presents another angle, lens, and filter of understanding.
6. The Synoptic Gospels: Before beginning a survey of each of the Gospels, it might be well to say a bit about the use of the term, *The Synoptic Gospels*. Though each Gospel has its distinct emphasis and purpose, the first three are sometimes referred to as the Synoptic Gospels because they “see together,” that is, they have the same point of view with regard to the life of Christ, agreeing in subject matter and order. Further, they also present the life of Christ in a way that complements the picture given in the Gospel of John. The following show a number of areas that are common to each of the first three Gospels:
 - A. The announcement of the Messiah by John the Baptist ([Matt. 3](#), [Mark 1](#), and [Luke 3](#)).
 - B. The baptism of Jesus ([Matt. 3](#), [Mark 1](#), and [Luke 3](#)).
 - C. The temptation of Jesus ([Matt. 4](#), [Mark 1](#), and [Luke 4](#)).
 - D. The teaching and miracles of Jesus (The major portion of each Gospel).
 - E. The transfiguration of Jesus ([Matt. 17](#), [Mark 9](#), and [Luke 9](#)).
 - F. The trial, death, and burial of Jesus ([Matt. 26-27](#), [Mark 14-15](#), [Luke 22-23](#)).The resurrection of Jesus ([Matt. 28](#), [Mark 16](#), [Luke 24](#)).
7. Matthew’s audience was Greek-speaking Jewish Christians. He constantly used the Old Testament to validate that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and King long awaited by the Jews. Matthew addresses his Gospel primarily to the Jews to convince them that Jesus of Nazareth is their Messiah, the King of the Jews. With the genealogy of Jesus, Matthew also uses ten fulfillment quotations by which he seeks to show that this Jesus, though rejected and crucified,

is the long-awaited Messiah of the Old Testament ([Matt. 1:23; 2:15; 2:18; 2:23; 4:15; 8:15; 12:18-21; 13:35; 21:5; 27:9-10](#)). But though rejected by the nation as a whole and crucified, the King left an empty tomb.

8. Mark is a fast-moving, action packed book presenting Jesus' supernatural works in a compelling manner. Mark seems to be addressed to the Romans, a people of action but of few words, and presents Jesus as *the Servant of the Lord* who came "to give His life a ransom for many." In keeping with this, Mark, the shortest of the Gospels, is vivid, active or lively, and presents a very clear eyewitness account, especially of the last week of Jesus' life on earth. "A full 37 percent of this Gospel is devoted to the events of His last and most important week."¹²
9. Luke, also the author of the Book of Acts, was a physician and companion of the Apostle Paul. He shows Jesus interacting with a wide range of people like women, Gentiles, outsiders, slaves, poor, and people of disreputable character. The main theme of Luke's gospel is the nature of Jesus' Messiahship and mission to all people Jews, Gentiles, the poor, lost, and hurting. See Luke 19:10 Luke, the doctor historian, presents Jesus as the perfect *Son of Man* who came "to seek and to save that which was lost" ([Luke 19:10](#)). Luke strongly stresses the true humanity of Christ while also declaring His deity. Some believe that Luke particularly had the Greeks in mind because of their keen interest in human philosophy.
10. John selectively chose key stories and teachings of Christ to "help us believe" that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He inspires us to place our total faith in Christ. John immediately (1:1-2) focuses the reader on the deity of Christ by presenting Jesus as the *eternal Son of God* who gives eternal and abundant life to all who would receive Him by believing in Him ([John 1:12; 3:16-18, 36; 10:10](#)). Though written to all mankind, John's Gospel is especially written to the church. Five chapters record the farewell discourses of Jesus to His disciples to comfort them just a few hours before His death. In addition, seven miraculous signs of Jesus are set forth to demonstrate that Jesus is the Savior and to encourage people everywhere to believe in Him that they might have life ([John 20:30-31](#)).
11. All of the four gospels contain parables that Christ taught. A parable is a story that teaches a moral lesson or truth. It is not an attempt to be scientifically factual, but it is true to life. Parables are designed to make one main point, and every detail of the parable will reinforce the main point.
12. An allegory is a story with an underlying meaning that differs from the surface facts of the story itself. It is a symbolic story, describing one thing by using the image of another. An allegory can be found in Galatians 4:22-26
13. The Book of Acts is the "Part Two" of the Gospel of Luke. It tells the story of what Christ, by His Holy Spirit, continued to do through the apostles after He ascended to heaven. Christ came back in the Person of the Holy Spirit and continued to lead His kingdom invasion on earth through His disciples.
14. The New Testament epistles (letters) are a combination of private correspondence and public address. The writers used the normal conventions of their day, like we use in writing business letters. Epistles include: a.) opening or salutation, b.) thanksgiving, c.) body of the letter, moral exhortations, closing. The names given to each epistle come from either a.) where the target audience lives (like Corinth for Corinthians), b.) the author (like Peter), c.) the person receiving the letter (like Timothy).
15. Romans: This is the most systematic of Paul's letters. It is more like an elaborate theological essay. There is strong emphasis on the most important Christian doctrines: sin & death, salvation, grace, faith, righteousness, justification, sanctification, redemption, resurrection, and glorification. In his letter to the Romans, Paul expresses God's deep concern and promises for Israel.

16. 1st & 2nd Corinthians: These letters revolve around the theme of problems in Christian conduct in the church. Topics include: the fruit and gifts of the Holy Spirit, unity in the body of Christ, the role of apostolic leadership and church government, sexual morality, propriety in corporate worship, the Lord's Supper, the resurrection of the dead, the responsibility for generous giving, and more.
17. Galatians: This letter to the church at Galatia was written to confront serious heresy promoted by those called "Judaizers", a group who insisted that conformity to Jewish law was the key to salvation and right relationship with God. Paul insisted that right relationship with God comes through faith in Christ. This letter is a vigorous defense for the essential New Testament truth that people are justified by faith in Jesus Christ, and that they are sanctified not by legalistic works but by the obedience that comes from faith in God's work for them.
18. Ephesians: This letter to the church at Ephesus is written to expand the horizons of the readers, so that they might understand better the dimensions of God's eternal purpose and grace and come to appreciate the high goals God has for the church.
19. Philippians: Paul writes this letter to the church at Philippi for several reasons: a. to thank them for their financial gifts, b. to encourage them to stand firm in the face of persecution, c. to exhort them to humility and unity.
20. Colossians: Paul's purpose for this letter to the church at Colosse was to refute heresies that were creeping into the church. To accomplish this goal, he exalts Christ as the very image of God, the Creator, the preexistent sustainer of all things, the head of the church, and more.
21. 1st & 2nd Thessalonians: Paul's purpose in writing this letter was to encourage the new converts in their trials, to give instruction concerning godly living, and to give assurance concerning the future of believers who die before Christ returns.
22. 1st & 2nd Timothy: Paul writes to his spiritual son "Timothy" in order to coach him in giving spiritual oversight to others.
23. Titus: Paul writes to "Titus", another spiritual son and comrade, to clarify how he is to lead and teach. He also uses the letter to help administrate Titus' ministry efforts.
24. Philemon: Paul writes Philemon to persuade him to receive, honor, and partner with Onesimus in the ministry.
25. Hebrews: The theme of Hebrews is the absolute supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ as revealer and as mediator of God's grace.
26. James: This letter from James emphasizes true and vital Christianity as characterized by good deeds and a faith that works.
27. 1st & 2nd Peter: Peter wrote these letters to touch on various doctrines of the faith and has much to say about Christian life and duties.
28. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, John: John's readers were being confronted by a heresy called "Gnosticism", a false notion that one could get to God through special knowledge. John corrects this notion and gives other insight into the benefits of faith in Christ.
29. Jude: This letter is a warning about certain immoral men who were false teachers.
30. Revelation: Written to Christians during a time of great persecution, it instructs them in how to maintain faith in Christ during hard times. It also brings encouragement by predicting the victorious return of Christ as a just, mighty, Warrior King.