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How to Read and Study the Bible

Lesson Four – Part 4 (continued): What is the New Testament Components/Classifications/Contents

Lesson Four Topics

- Reflection Questions
- Key Terms
- Components of the New Testament
- Classifications of the New Testament
- **Contents of the New Testament**
- **Check Your Progress Questions**

Reflection Questions

A. What method(s) of communication do you find to be the **most effective** in distributing important information that you want your audience to remember?

B. What do you find to be the **least effective** method(s) of communication to help your audience remember important information?

Key Terms

Acts of the Apostles
Apocalypse
Aramaic
Christian Church
Disciples
Epistles
Eὐangelion
Evangelism/Evangelist

Faith/Faithful
Genres
Gospels
History
Holy Spirit
Koine Greek
New Earth
New Heaven

Revelation
Synoptic
Types
Unfaithful
Witnessing

Important Emphasis 1a:

Our Faithfulness to the holy scripture is pivotal to the potency of the operative measure of the church today. The principles and or lessons from the first century church are derived from oral traditions and written traditions of the teaching and preaching of Jesus; the customs, ceremonies of significance, and the regulations that were implemented in order to avoid heresy, and false doctrine were admirable and necessary to maintain the spiritual purity of the faith. Therefore, the Gospel, the Groundwork of the holy spirit, and the Grace to execute it, will ignite our discussion.

Important Emphasis 1b: There are three categories that are important to our biblical understanding. These categories impact the way in which we view scripture, and it actively informs us on how to follow through with these sacred text in our everyday lives.

Writers – Those who share the Gospel story. These are the immediate disciples and other followers of Christ who took the oral traditions of Jesus and transitioned them into written traditions. A great source to consider is the Didache, this assists in acknowledging the ancient teaching traditions. Luke 1, John 20:30-31

Witnesses- These individuals are the eyewitnesses and or the ear witnesses. The experience which these believers gleaned, were as follows: They heard, they felt, they walk with Christ and more importantly submitted to the guidance and instructions that came from Jesus Christ. There are those who wrote the gospels that had this experience while others received the accounts from sacred acquaintances (disciples). Acts 1:8, Acts 4:20

Waiters/ Workers- The final category that is necessary to understand is the servants of today. Those who are a part of the visible church. We use a combination of the writers and the witnesses that shape our understanding and how we live our lives today. This also assist in our view of servitude in the church as well as the community at large. Colossians 3:23-24

Composition

The original language of the New Testament is **Koine Greek**. This was the common Greek language of the first century. The entire New Testament was written in **Koine Greek** with the exception of a few passages that were written in **Aramaic**, which was the language that Jesus Christ spoke. The twenty-seven

books of the New Testament were preserved and handed down to us in the **Greek** language.

The majority of the New Testament is contained within the **four gospels** (see chart 3).

The books of the New Testament are not arranged in **chronological** order. Although the Gospel according to Matthew appears first, it was not the first Gospel written. The gospel of **Mark** (approximately AD 65-70) was the first gospel written and then others followed soon after. The books of the New Testament are arranged by type or **genre** of writing, i.e., Gospels, history, epistles, apocalyptic.

Check Your Progress

1. What is the original language of the New Testament?

Koine Greek

2. What are some significant factors about the original language of the New Testament.

This was the common Greek language of the first century. The entire New Testament was written in **Koine Greek** with the exception of a few passages that were written in **Aramaic**.

3. What language did Jesus speak?

Aramaic

4. In what language was the New Testament preserved and handed down?

Greek

New Testament Classifications

The Gospels Matthew Mark Luke John Christian History Acts of the Apostles	The Pauline Epistles Romans I & II Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians Philemon I & II Thessalonians Pastoral Epistles I & II Timothy Titus	The General Epistles Hebrews James I, II, & III John I & II Peter Jude The Apocalypse of John Revelation
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Chart 3

Contents of the New Testament

The New Testament is the account of God’s final and complete **self-revelation** of Himself to humanity.

In this section, we will discuss the contents of the various New Testament Classifications: The Gospels, The Acts of the Apostles, The Epistles, and the Book of Revelation.

The Gospels

The word *gospel* comes from the Greek word *euangelion* which means **“good news.”** The words *evangelism* and *evangelist* are also derived from the word *gospel*. The gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are called **evangelists** because they tell the Good News about Jesus Christ. The stories about Jesus are the Good News about God’s plan of **salvation** and **redemption** for the world (Luke 4:18-20).

Important Emphasis:

The noun *euangelion* originally signified an announcement of victory after the battle and after the content of that message . The term also came to describe the birth of the rise to power of a new king, an inscription from Priene in Asia Minor, probably written around 9 B.C. describes the enthronement of Augustus as the new Roman emperor. Augustus is lauded as the savior who will bring peace, and his birthday is hailed as “ the beginning of the glad tidings (*euangelion*) that have

come to men through him” This illustrates the religious content of the term in emperor worship.

When one compares pagan use of euangelion and the LXX’s use of *euangelizomai*, a striking parallel arises of a king worshiped by his people. The gospel and its confession that Jesus is lord confront the claim that Caesar is Lord and declare that in the cross and resurrection Jesus is enthroned as the king of kings.

The Gospels

The four gospels are the primary, **historical source** for the study of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. The gospels provide us with information about Jesus’ call of His first disciples (Matt. 4:18; Mark 1:16; Luke 5:1-10)

Each gospel writer was used differently as they were **inspired** by the Holy Spirit to provide different aspects of the life of Jesus. No contradictions!

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are referred to as *synoptic* gospels. The term *synoptic* comes from the Greek word *sunoptikos*, “to see things together.” These three gospels are studied together because their view of the life of Christ is considered sufficiently **similar**. (*The Moody Handbook of Theology* (p. 83).

In contrast to the synoptists, John wrote to a **general audience**. His gospel’s uniqueness is seen in that 92 percent of it is not found in the Synoptics. (*The Moody Handbook of Theology* p. 138.)

The Gospels are historical summaries, accounts of miracles performed by Jesus, and **statements of faith** that empowered and encouraged the early Christians during times of trial and persecution. The evangelist John declared that the gospels were written so that we might **believe** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who took away the sins of the world (John 20:30-31).

Check Your Progress

5. What do you believe to be the central message of the New Testament?

The New Testament is the account of God’s final and complete **self-revelation** of Himself to humanity.

6. Why are the Gospels called the primary source book for the study of the life of Jesus Christ?

The four gospels are the primary, **historical source** for the study of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

7. What does it mean to say that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?

The evangelist John declared that the gospels were written so that we might **believe** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who took away the sins of the world (John 20:30-31).

History - The Acts of the Apostles

The Book of Acts was written by **Luke**. Though not an eyewitness, Luke was a credible investigative reporter of those things told to him by “**eyewitnesses** and **ministers of the word**...” (Luke 1:1-3 KJV). Acts includes accounts of how the Christian church began its rapid growth from being a Judean Jewish religious movement to becoming a worldwide religious movement that included Gentiles from all over the known world.

Acts details the church’s first 30 years of existence from its initial beginning on the Day of **Pentecost** (Acts 2:1-39). It describes the call of Saul of Tarsus to the ministry and details of his three missionary journeys to strengthen the church in its infancy, culminating in a trip to Rome where it is believed he met his demise at the direction of Caesar. (Acts 9:1-10; 13-28; 2 Timothy 4:6-8)

Epistles

EPISTLE, ě-pis’l (GK, ěπιστολή: *epistolē*, “a letter,” or “epistle”; from GK, ěπιστέλλω: *epistēllō*, “to send to”).

(Source: “Epistle,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*)

The Greek word *epistolē* (“epistle,” “letter”) originally referred to an oral communication sent by a messenger. The word “letter” was a broad designation for different types of documents in the ancient world, and could include a great variety of commercial, governmental and legal documents, as well as political and military reports, along with other sorts of correspondence, especially of a personal kind.

(*Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 1993 edition, edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne, et al.)

The epistles form the largest single **genre** [type or category] of writings in the New Testament:

21 epistles in the NT

13 written by Paul

5 General Epistles - The Holy Spirit used the apostles Paul, Peter, James, John (1,2,3 & Rev.), and Jude to write these doctrinal and instructional Christian letters.

The writer of Hebrews is categorized as unknown.

Paul [the most prolific epistle-writer in the Bible] adapted the **Greco-Roman** letter models for Christian purposes. He wrote as an apostle—representative of Christ—in order to instruct, give advice, encourage, and reprimand (see 1 Thess. 5:27 and 2 Thess. 3:14-15).

(Source: Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, 1993 edition, edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne, et al., p. 551)

Without the epistles, we would not have any information regarding what the early Christian churches taught and practiced. They are very important **sacred writings** for us and provide a model for what the church of this millennium should be and look like. (Guns, p. 44)

In the 50's of the 1st century Paul produced the earliest surviving Christian documents; I Thessalonians, Galatians, Philippians, Philemon, I and II Corinthians, and Romans. By the mid 60's death had come to the most famous of the earlier generation.

The Book of Revelation

The word *revelation* comes from the Greek word *apokalypsis* (apoc-alyse) which literally means “to **reveal** or **unveil**.” Some refer to Revelation as prophecy, however, it is more apocalyptic than prophetic.

Revelation is the **unveiling** of the things that will come at the end of time.

The Holy Spirit used the apostle John, a faithful witness, when he was exiled on the Isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:9-10). Revelation is full of symbolism, numbers, and imagery that are largely unknown to us today.

New Christians should not be led in a study of Revelation without first being taught the meaning of the rest of the Bible.

The book contains seven letters from the triumphant Jesus Christ to the seven churches of Asia Minor (see Rev. 1:4; 2:1-3:22).

In Revelation, God reveals to us what joy awaits us when the final trumpet is sounded, and the last battle is won (Rev. 21:9-22:5).

God is going to bring about a “new Heaven and a New earth.” The fate of the “faithful” and the “unfaithful” will be finalized. (Rev. 21:8; 22:15).

Check Your Progress Questions

8. The New Testament is primarily made up of what genre or type of writings?

Epistles

9. Which books are considered Pauline Epistles?

Romans, I & II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus

10. What does the word Revelation mean?

“to reveal or unveil.”

[Note: Study materials adapted from “The Bible: An Introduction” by G. V. Guns unless otherwise noted]