

LESSON 5 The Books of the New Testament

At the time the New Testament was being written, the Old Testament picture had changed very much. The days of the prophets were gone, and many people were indifferent to spiritual things. Like the rest of the Near East and Europe, the Jewish nation came under Roman rule. Though it was a difficult time for the Jewish people and they longed for freedom, outside influence did offer some benefits. A strong Roman army saw to it that roads were safe for commerce, and increased travel allowed Greek culture with its music and art to spread throughout the empire.

It was not by chance that God sent His Son to the world at this time. The Greeks furnished a common language for communicating the gospel and the Romans gave reasonable protection and liberties for evangelism.

The New Testament is the story of the life of Christ and the beginning of Christianity. The New Testament books contain instructions and promises for all believers, prophecies concerning the future, and the hope of eternal life with Christ. Read these books to learn their truths firsthand.

The Plan

- A. Organizing the Classifications
- B. Explaining the Classifications

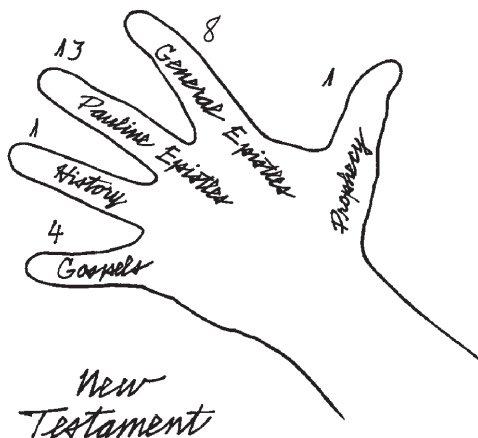
The Goals

1. List the major classifications of the New Testament.
2. Describe the different emphasis each Gospel places on Christ.
3. State the key message of Acts.
4. Give reasons the Epistles are important.
5. State one fact about the main teaching of each author of the general Epistles.
6. Describe some of the content and values of the book of Revelation.

A. ORGANIZING THE CLASSIFICATIONS

Goal 1. List the major classifications of the New Testament.

In Lesson 4, we learned that the Old Testament has five major classifications. The New Testament also has five classifications. It is easy to remember them using the same method we used with the Old Testament.



The New Testament has twenty-seven books, as follows:

GOSPELS	HISTORY	GENERAL EPISTLES	PAULINE EPISTLES	PROPHECY
Matthew Mark Luke John	Acts	Hebrews James 1 & 2 Peter 1, 2, & 3 John Jude	Romans 1 & 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians 1 & 2 Thessalonians 1 & 2 Timothy Titus Philemon	Revelation

Application

1 Which one of the classifications below is seen in both the Old and New Testaments?

- History
- Pauline Epistles
- Prophecy
- Gospels
- General Epistles

B. EXPLAINING THE CLASSIFICATIONS

The Gospels

Goal 2. Describe the different emphasis each Gospel places on Christ.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote the life of Christ in the Gospels that bear their names. These writers are sometimes called the *Four Evangelists*. Each has a different focus or emphasis.

Matthew presents Jesus as King, or Messiah. Quoting the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah (the name the Jews

gave to their expected king or deliverer), Matthew shows how Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures.

Mark wrote to the Romans, most of whom did not know the Scriptures. He filled his gospel with dynamic action as he showed his readers that Jesus came as the Servant of God.

Luke, a physician, wrote his Gospel for a Greek friend. He emphasized Christ's perfect manhood, presenting Him as the Son of Man.

John gives evidence to show that Jesus is the Son of God and that those who believe on Him have eternal life.

The first three Gospels are called "synoptic" as they give a synopsis or a complete view of Jesus' life. They are similar in their choice of events to relate. John, however, does not emphasize the history of Jesus as much as His sayings and teachings.

Application

2 The Gospel that quotes many prophecies to show Jesus is the promised King is

- a) Matthew.
- b) Mark.
- c) Luke.

3 In Luke 1:1–4, Luke says he based his writing on

- a) rumor or hearsay.
- b) personal experience as a disciple.
- c) careful investigation and talking to eyewitnesses.

4 Mark filled his Gospel with

- a) prophecies from the Old Testament.
- b) sermons of Jesus.
- c) the dynamic action in Jesus' work.

5 In John 20:30–31, John explains that he wrote so his readers would believe in Jesus as the

- a) perfect man and follow His example.
- b) Son of God, and have everlasting life in Him.
- c) best man who ever lived.

- 6** Luke's main emphasis about Jesus was that He was the
- a)** Son of Man.
 - b)** Messiah of the Jews.
 - c)** Son of God.

History

Goal 3. State the key message of Acts.

Luke wrote the *Acts of the Apostles* to tell how Christ sent the Holy Spirit to continued His work on earth after Christ went back to heaven.

Apostle means “sent” or “one who is sent.” Acts tells how the *sent ones* of the Lord took the gospel to their world.

One of the main persons in the book of Acts is Paul. He was the apostle to the Gentiles. Gentiles were people who were not Jews. Luke went with Paul on some trips and tells of their exciting missionary adventures. He tells of how the Holy Spirit used Paul to start the Christian church in many countries.

The key text is Acts 1:8. Every Christian should memorize it: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Application

- 7** The title *Acts of the Apostles* means acts of the
- a)** successors.
 - b)** sent ones.
 - c)** representatives.

8 (Fill in the blanks to complete the following statement.)

The physician named accompanied Paul on his missionary journeys to the

- 9 The key message of Acts is that
- a) Paul would convert all the Gentiles.
 - b) Luke would be a missionary doctor.
 - c) the Holy Spirit would give power to witness.

Pauline Epistles

Goal 4. Give reasons the Epistles are important.

The thirteen Pauline Epistles are letters Paul wrote, some of them to churches he had founded. The book of Hebrews was not signed, so we cannot say definitely that Paul wrote it. Most scholars do not feel he did, so we are not including Hebrews in the list of Paul's Epistles.

Romans	1 and 2 Thessalonians
1 and 2 Corinthians	1 and 2 Timothy
Galatians	Titus
Ephesians	Philemon
Philippians	
Colossians	

Since there were no printing presses, the Epistles were passed from church to church. It is possible that at each place the members made a copy to keep and study.

Romans has been called “the cathedral of Christian doctrine” because of its clear, powerful explanation of salvation. Justification by faith is its theme.

Paul wrote *1 and 2 Corinthians* to the church he had founded in Corinth. These letters addressed problems of doctrine and conduct in the church.

The next Epistle, *Galatians*, has the same theme as *Romans*—justification by faith. It emphasizes that no one can save himself or herself by good works, only by faith in Jesus Christ.

While Paul was in jail for preaching the gospel, he wrote *Ephesians*, *Philippians*, and *Colossians*. These Epistles, called “prison Epistles,” are about living the Christian life.

Both letters to the *Thessalonians* tell what will happen just before Jesus returns from heaven. You can read about His return in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18.

Four of Paul’s Epistles are to individuals. The two letters to *Timothy* and the one to *Titus* are especially helpful to pastors. Just before Paul gave his life for the cause of Christ, he wrote his last letter to Timothy, charging him to be faithful in God’s work. Read 2 Timothy 4:5–8.

Onesimus, Philemon’s runaway slave, was saved while he was in jail with Paul. Paul wrote asking *Philemon* to forgive Onesimus and receive him as a brother in Christ.

Application

10 The word *Epistle* means

- a) doctrine.
- b) letter.
- c) copied.

11 The main theme of each Epistle is listed on the left. Write in front of each, the number of the book or books it matches.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| ... a) Living the Christian life | 1) Romans and Galatians |
| ... b) Justification by faith | 2) Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians |
| ... c) Jesus return from heaven | 3) 1 and 2 Thessalonians |
| ... d) Forgiveness for a slave | 4) 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus |
| ... e) How a pastor should work | 5) Philemon |

12 (Circle the letter before the correct completions to the following sentence.) The Pauline Epistles are important because they

- a) give advice to believers.
 - b) tell us how to be saved.
 - c) tell how the prophets lived.
 - d) give clear teaching on doctrine.
 - e) were all written in prisons.
 - f) tell pastors and churches how to work.
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General Epistles

Goal 5. State one fact about the main teaching of each author of the general Epistles.

The Pauline Epistles carry the names of the persons to whom they are addressed, but the general Epistles go by the names of the ones who wrote them. Since Hebrews was an unnamed book, early editors assumed the audience was the Hebrew people. The early church then adopted the name *Hebrews* for this epistle.

Even though Hebrews has been included in the New Testament from the days of the early church, scholars today are somewhat divided on who actually wrote the epistle. Authorship has been traditionally ascribed either to Paul or Barnabas—both of whom were capable of providing this material. Although we are not certain of the authorship, no question should exist as to the book’s divine inspiration and usefulness for the body of Christ.

The key word of *Hebrews* is “better.” This letter to Hebrew Christians reminded them that the new covenant is better than the old. Hebrews shows how the symbolic rites and sacrifices under the Law were pictures of Jesus, who became our high priest and the supreme sacrifice for our sins.

James, author of the book that bears his name, was pastor of the church in Jerusalem. This James was also probably

the brother of Jesus. James, John’s brother, had already been beheaded.

James teaches that living faith in Christ will produce good works. Our works do not save us. But if we are saved, we are expected to do what we can for God and His people.

Peter’s letters of encouragement for suffering Christians remind them that the Lord will come back someday and reward them for their faithfulness.

John, the beloved disciple, lived the longest of the twelve. He wrote a gospel and three Epistles bearing his name. The theme of God’s love that makes us love one another carries through all his writings. He also wrote *Revelation*, the book that reveals Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Jude, the last Epistle, was written by a brother of James and probably a brother of Jesus. He warns the reader against false teachings and speaks of Jesus’ return to judge the world.

Application

13 What is the theme of each of the Epistles listed below?

James

.....

1 and 2 Peter

.....

1, 2, and 3 John

.....

Jude

.....

Hebrews



Prophecy

Goal 6. Describe some of the content and values of the book of Revelation.

The book of Revelation is also called the Apocalypse because it unveils the future. Its symbolic visions are similar to those in the book of Daniel. John, the author, was an old man in exile on the island of Patmos when he was given visions of the last days of this age, of heaven, and of the coming kingdom of God.

Though John had known Jesus when He carried out His earthly ministry, he saw Jesus again as the mighty conqueror. John saw Jesus as the one who holds all authority (Revelation 1:18).

As the revelation of Christ changed Patmos into the doorway of heaven for John, it also brings light into our darkness, joy into our lives, and hope into a chaotic world.

Application

14 (Circle the letters before the correct completions to the following statement.) In the revelation on Patmos,

- a) the future was made known.
- b) John could see no ray of hope.
- c) John saw visions of the last days.

15 Two books that are very similar in their symbolic pictures of world conflicts, the rule of the Antichrist, and the final triumph of Christ are

- a) Isaiah and 1 Peter.
- b) Daniel and Revelation.
- c) Ezekiel and Revelation.

16 Read Revelation chapters 1 and 21–22. How do you feel when you read these chapters? Are you thrilled to think that Christ will be coming back soon? Is John's prayer in 22:20 yours? Pray that God will help you remember this as you live and work for Him.



Check Your Answers

- 1** History
- 9 c)** the Holy Spirit would give power to witness.
- 2 a)** Matthew.
- 10 b)** letter.
- 3 c)** careful investigation and talking to eyewitnesses.
- 11 a)** 2. Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians
b) 1. Romans and Galatians
c) 3. 1 and 2 Thessalonians
d) 5. Philemon
e) 4. 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus
- 4 c)** the dynamic action in Jesus' work.
- 12 a)** give advice to believers.
b) tell us how to be saved.
d) give clear teaching on doctrine.
f) tell pastors and churches how to work.
- 5 b)** Son of God, and have everlasting life in Him.
- 13** Check your answers by referring back to the discussion about each book.
- 6 a)** Son of Man.
- 14 a)** the future was made known.
c) John saw visions of the last days.
- 7 b)** sent ones.
- 15 b)** Daniel and Revelation.
- 8** Luke, Gentiles.
- 16** Your answers

