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How to Read and Study the Bible
Lesson Four – Part 4 (continued) B2: What is the New Testament
(Emphasis on the Epistle)
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. Why is the Reading of Scripture in the Worship Service still **relevant** in the Church today?

B. When you are facing **challenges** in your everyday Christian walk which Epistle(s) do you refer to the most?

Key Terms

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

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

Revelation
Synoptic
Types
Unfaithful
Relationship
Epistle
Reading
Liturgy

Important Emphasis:

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 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 all will ignite our discussion.

Composition

The original language of the New Testament is _____. This was the common Greek language of the first century. The entire New Testament was written in _____ with the exception of a few passages that were written in _____, 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 _____ language.

The majority of the New Testament is contained within the _____ (see chart 3).

The books of the New Testament are not arranged in _____ order. Although the Gospel according to Matthew appears first, it was not the first Gospel written. The gospel of _____ (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 _____ of writing, i.e., Gospels, history, epistles, apocalyptic.

Check Your Progress

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

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

3. What language did Jesus speak?

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

Classifications

New Testament Classifications

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

Contents of the New Testament

The New Testament is the account of God’s final and complete _____ 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 *evangelion* which means “_____.” The words *evangelism* and *evangelist* are also derived from the word *gospel*. The gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are called

_____ because they tell the Good News about Jesus Christ. The stories about Jesus are the Good News about God's plan of _____ and _____ 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, _____ 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 _____ 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 _____. (*The Moody Handbook of Theology* (p. 83).

In contrast to the synoptists, John wrote to a _____. 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 _____ 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 _____ 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?

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

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

History - The Acts of the Apostles

The Book of Acts was written by _____. Though not an eyewitness, Luke was a credible investigative reporter of those things told to him by “_____ and ministers of the _____...” (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 _____ (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)

The Epistles

Define Epistle

Practice of the Church with Epistles

History of Epistles

Lessons of the Epistles

EPISTLE, ě-pis'1 (GK, ἐπιστολή: *epistolē*, “a letter,” or “epistle;” from GK, ἐπιστέλλω: *epistēllō*, “to send to”).
(Source: “Epistle,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*)

*Epistle can also be a “message” a term for a group of letters found in the New Testament. Readings from these writings in worship. (*Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*)

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 _____ [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 _____ 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 _____
_____ for us and provide a model for what the church of this millennium should be and look like. (Gunns, p. 44)

Practice of the Church

Epistles in Christian Worship it was long customary to read two passages of scripture to be read or sung at the Eucharist.

The **Reader** or **Chanter** of the Epistle has sometimes been known as the Epistoler.

Until the 8TH century the reading of the Epistles was assigned to the lector [reader] then it fell to the deacons and come to be regarded as his special function. In modern times this falls to the lay person or celebrant himself.

Epistles was made to provide continuity from Sunday to Sunday “*lectio continua*” survived.

History of the Epistles

The Epistle was originally called, as it still is in the eastern churches, *the Apostle*, as distinct from the Prophecy and the Gospel.

In the east and in the west, the term came to denote the book that contained the readings.

Origin of letters the word is *gramma*.

Christianity has been shaped by reading old letters. (But these writings have the residue of fresh revelation)

Lessons from the Epistles

Clarity

Construction

Content

Learning more about the writer/recipient clarifies many of the obscure comments found in the letters. This also yields to the audience a better understanding of the letter writing practices at a particular time.

G. Adolph Deissmann affected the study of NT Letters drawing a distinction between letters (artless, unmediated, private letters of the lower class) and epistles (the literary letters of the aristocratic elite)

These letters had a set structure and content.

Generic greetings, set phraseology. (formulas)
Standard wishes and good health.

Greco Roman letters opened with Sender to Recipient greetings . “ A wealth wish or prayer followed. **Letters had two purposes to beseech and to greet!**

The Letters were also used to Keep a relationship with the recipient. It was about relationships.

All New Testament letters (except 3 John) are addressed to groups.

The letters assume familiarity with Jewish Christian tradition, inserting OT quotations / allusions, hymnic fragments, often without explanation or indication.

Paul’s letters contained more thanksgiving than any other known ancient writer. His opening thanksgiving often previewed the letter’s main topics. 1 Cor. 1:4-7

Morality- His letters also contained large amounts of parenthesis (moral exhortation)

The New Testament letters deviate from the norm. The sender presented himself as a slave of Christ. Tradition Jewish shalom peace, wholeness.

Paul’s letters average 2,495 words

Romans 7114 words

Paul’s opponents ridiculed his letters as weighty (2 Corinthians 10:10), both for their complexity as well as their length.

The Book of Revelation

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

Revelation is the _____ 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

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

10. Which books are considered Pauline Epistles?

11. What does the word Revelation mean?

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