

The Bible: God's Truth

Unit 1, Lesson 2b

The New Testament

The 27 books of the New Testament are broken into these categories:

GOSPELS: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

HISTORY: Acts

PAULINE EPISTLES: Romans through Philemon

GENERAL EPISTLES: Hebrews through Jude

PROPHECY: Revelation

An epistle is a letter, usually formal correspondence.

GOSPELS

These four books are written accounts of Jesus' earthly ministry, describing the good news of salvation to enter God's Kingdom through His provision of the ultimate sacrifice for mankind's sins: Jesus.

"Gospel" is from the Greek word *εὐαγγέλιον* (euaggelion) meaning "good news."

MATTHEW: written by Matthew, one of the twelve Apostles, a former tax collector, emphasizing Jesus as Messiah, for a Jewish audience

MARK: a short record of Jesus' ministry, focusing on the cross, probably written for Gentiles, considered the memoirs of Peter recorded by John Mark

Gentile:
➤ one who is not a Jew

LUKE: a gospel written after research and investigation by Luke the physician, who accompanied the Apostle Paul on his missionary journeys, focusing on Jesus' relationship with people

JOHN: written by John, one of the twelve Apostles, and one of the three closest to Jesus during His earthly ministry

Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as "synoptic" gospels. Synoptic is from the Greek for synopsis meaning "seeing together." This term describes these gospels because they portray similar incidents and teachings.

Each gospel writer gives his reason for writing an account of Jesus' life. Read these passages and find out why they did it.

Matthew 1:1

1. What does Matthew consider important to establish at the beginning of his narrative?

Mark 1:1

2. What was Mark's purpose for writing this material, keeping in mind the meaning of the word "gospel."
3. How does Mark describe Jesus in this verse and how is this significant?

Mark is thought to be the earliest gospel written.

"Christ" is Greek and "Messiah" is Hebrew for "Anointed One."

Luke 1:1-4

4. What did Luke do before he wrote his history of Jesus' life and ministry?
5. What reason does he give for preparing this manuscript?

The name Theophilus means "lover of God."

John 20:30-31

6. What does John hope you will do when you read what he has written?
7. What benefit will belief of what he has written bring to you (John 3:14-15)?

HISTORY

A single book describes the history of the believers immediately after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, the establishment of belief among Jews and Gentiles, and details of Paul's missionary journeys in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey).

ACTS: a continuation of Luke's report after his research into the faith-based movement centered on Jesus, the Messiah

"Pauline" refers to the Apostle Paul

PAULINE EPISTLES

The Apostle Paul established groups of believers throughout Asia Minor. At least nine letters he wrote to these churches to instruct and encourage them have been preserved in the New Testament. These letters would have been circulated among the churches so that others would receive the message as well. Four letters that Paul also wrote to individuals are part of the Bible.

Asia Minor = Macedonia = Turkey

ROMANS: a letter to the church in Rome

Rome, Italy, was the capital city of the ancient Roman Empire

1 AND 2 CORINTHIANS: two letters to the church at Corinth

Corinth was a city in Greece

GALATIANS: a letter to the churches of Galatia

Galatia was a region of northern and central Asia Minor

EPHESIANS: a letter to the church in Ephesus

Ephesus was a city on the western coast of Asia Minor

PHILIPPIANS: a letter to the church at Philippi

Philippi, Colossae, and Thessalonica were cities located in Asia Minor

COLOSSIANS: a letter to the church at Colossae

1 and 2 THESSALONIANS: two letters to the church at Thessalonica with counsel and teaching

1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are also known as the Pastoral Epistles

1 and 2 TIMOTHY: two letters to Timothy, a young man with whom Paul had a close relationship

TITUS: a letter to Titus to strengthen him in his work with the church along with instructions about church matters

PHILEMON: a letter to Philemon regarding the return of his slave

GENERAL EPISTLES

These letters have various authors, including the apostles Peter and John.

Abraham, the founding father of the Jewish race, was the first person called a Hebrew in the Bible (Genesis 14:13)

HEBREWS: written by an unknown author describing the priesthood of Jesus; some believe it was authored by Paul, but this is inconclusive

Hebrew = Israelite = Jew

JAMES: a letter to the church about practical lifestyle issues for the believer; the first book of the New Testament to be written

Petrine epistles are those written by Peter

1 and 2 PETER: two letters to the church written by the Apostle Peter, warning of false teachers and outlining events of the return of Jesus

Johannine epistles are those written by John

1, 2, and 3 JOHN: three letters written by the Apostle John, concerned with living a life of love

JUDE: a short letter warning against false teachers

PROPHECY

Much effort is put into understanding the only New Testament book of prophecy, although with no consensus about how the images and details should be interpreted. This makes it an exciting and puzzling book to study.

REVELATION: Jesus reveals events to occur on earth, including His return to earth as victor and ruler over evil and the establishment of God's dwelling with mankind, in a vision to the Apostle John near the end of John's life.

Revelation means something revealed, which is, in this case, events in mankind's history

"Apocalypse" is from the Greek, meaning a prophetic disclosure or revelation

PROPHECY: Read **Hebrews 1:1-2**

How has God spoken in the past?

What were prophets to do with their messages?

How has God spoken in these last days?

How was Jesus' ministry similar to that of the prophets? See Matthew 24:35; John 8:26, 28; 12:49, 50; 14:10.

When are the "last days" mentioned in Hebrews 1:2?

The Bible: God's Truth Key

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Each gospel writer gives his reason for writing an account of Jesus' life. Read these passages and find out why they did it.

Matthew 1:1

8. What does Matthew consider important to establish at the beginning of his narrative?

The connection of Jesus to King David and Abraham through genealogy.

Mark 1:1

9. What was Mark's purpose for writing this material, keeping in mind the meaning of the word "gospel."

Mark points out that he is writing to share good news about Jesus the anointed (Christ/Messiah) and son of God.

10. How does Mark describe Jesus in this verse and how is this significant?

Mark describes Jesus as "Christ" pointing out he is the anointed son of God, a prophet who brought God's message, a priest who offered himself as the sacrifice, and the future king of Israel.

Mark is thought to be the earliest gospel written.

"Christ" is Greek and "Messiah" is Hebrew for "Anointed One." Prophets, priests, and kings were anointed in ancient Israel.

Luke 1:1-4

11. What did Luke do before he wrote his history of Jesus' life and ministry?

He investigated carefully everything from the beginning of the events around Jesus life.

12. What reason does he give for preparing this manuscript?

Luke wanted to present a researched and consecutive report about the things of Jesus for Theophilus to have an exact account of what he had learned.

The name Theophilus means "lover of God."

John 20:30-31

13. What does John hope you will do when you read what he has written?

John wants readers to believe that Jesus is the anointed prophet/priest/king son of God.

14. What benefit will belief of what he has written bring to you (John 3:14-15)?

Life

HISTORY

A single book describes the history of the believers immediately after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, the establishment of belief among Jews and Gentiles, and details of Paul's missionary journeys in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey).

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PROPHECY: Read **Hebrews 1:1-2**

How has God spoken in the past?

God has spoken through prophets.

What were prophets to do with their messages?

Prophets were to pass on their messages to people of faith/Israel.

How has God spoken in these last days?

In these last days, God has spoken through Jesus.

How was Jesus' ministry similar to that of the prophets? See Matthew 24:35; John 8:26, 28; 12:49, 50; 14:10.

Matthew 24:35 Jesus speaks messages of lasting importance.

John 8:26, 28 Jesus speaks God's words as they are given to him.

John 12:49, 50 Jesus speaks just as God tells him to speak.

John 14:10 Jesus does not speak on his own initiative but only as God gives him to speak.

When are the "last days" mentioned in Hebrews 1:2?

"Last days" refers to the time of the church following Jesus' earthly ministry and before Jesus' return.

The Bible: God's Truth

Teacher's Guide

The Bible is a compilation of sacred and inspired writings of about 40 authors over a period of approximately 1500 years. It is divided into 66 "books" - 39 books in the Old Testament, 27 in the New Testament. The Old Testament material was written in ancient Hebrew with a few passages of Aramaic. The New Testament was originally in Koine Greek, the lingua franca of the first century AD.

Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury (d. 1228), is credited with creating chapter divisions for the Bible text. The Hebrew Scriptures already had verse divisions, but in the 1300's a rabbi named Solomon ben Ishmael added Langton's chapter divisions. The New Testament verse numbering was provided by Robert Estienne or Etienne when he printed a Greek NT with verse numbers in 1551.

It is important not to let the chapter and verse numbering interfere with understanding context of a passage. These numbers are artificial, do not have any special meaning, and are simply to be used as an aid to locate and communicate particular passages of Scripture. Keep in mind that an author's thoughts may begin before the start of a chapter or continue through a chapter/verse break.

Many translations also provide headings for chapters or other sections. These headings are not part of the original text and, as such, are not inspired Scripture. There is more about the history of the Bible in the next lesson (Unit 1, Lesson 3).

The New Testament is comprised of 27 writings by 9 or 10 men. The gospels are considered authored by the men after whom they are named. Acts is a continuation of the book of Luke. Pauline epistles (letters) refers to correspondence by the Apostle Paul to various churches and individuals. There is speculation that Paul authored Hebrews, but it is uncertain. James is thought to be the Lord's brother. Peter introduces himself as the author of the two letters that carry his name. There are three letters attributed to the Apostle John. Jude calls himself a brother to James, both may be the brothers to Jesus mentioned in Matthew 13:55. The Revelation is written by the Apostle John (Revelation 1:1).

Scholars disagree on the dates the New Testament books were written. Bible study helps and other sources will give approximate dates for authorship of the books with explanations for the reasoning that led to that determination.

The following list compiles information from several sources and puts the New Testament books in order from earliest to latest writing based on estimated dates of composition.

James (AD 44-49)
Galatians (AD 49-50)
Mark (AD 50-65)
Matthew (AD 50-65)
1 Thessalonians (AD 51)
2 Thessalonians (AD 51-52)
1 Corinthians (AD 55)
2 Corinthians (AD 55-57)
Romans (AD 57)
Luke (AD 60-61)
Ephesians (AD 60-62)
Philippians (AD 60-62)
Philemon (AD 60-62)
Colossians (AD 60-62)
Acts (AD 62)
1 Timothy (AD 62-64)
Titus (AD 62-64)
1 Peter (AD 62-65)
Jude (AD 65)
2 Timothy (AD 66-67)
2 Peter (AD 67-68)
Hebrews (AD 67-69)

John (AD 80-90)
1 John (AD 90-95)
2 John (AD 90-95)
3 John (AD 90-95)
Revelation (AD 94-96)

The Gospel writings describe the good news of the coming Kingdom of God. Jesus said he was sent to “proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God” (Luke 4:43) and in obedience to God, “he went on through towns and villages, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God” (8:1). Jesus then institutes the new covenant through his blood (Luke 22:20) and gives his life for the salvation of many.

Anointing with oil in the Old Testament indicated commissioning for a role or purpose. Priests, kings, and prophets were anointed. The Hebrew word “Messiah” means anointed. In Greek, “Christ” has the same meaning. While often an individual was anointed to one of the key roles, Jesus is Messiah/Christ and fulfills all three roles - a prophet who spoke forth God’s will and foretold end times events during his earthly ministry, a priest who offered himself as the sacrifice for sin and intercedes with God for his people (Hebrews 7:24-25), and the future king to rule the first stage of God’s Kingdom on earth (1 Corinthians 15:20-28).