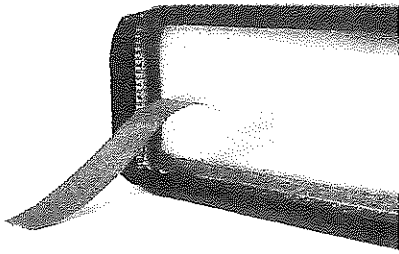


New Testament Books



Topic

Survey of the New Testament

Theme

God inspired each book of the New Testament with purpose and for our benefit.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will consider which New Testament books he will purpose to read and study over the next year.

Materials

- Resource 12

Scripture Focus

Various Bible passages

Summary

This lesson provides a brief summary of each book of the New Testament. Each one has a message designed by God and worthy of our attention and study.

Outline

I. The Gospels and Acts

II. The Pauline Epistles

III. The General Epistles and Revelation

Memory Verse

"Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (Revelation 22:7).

GETTING STARTED

LESSON 11

Sibling Confusion

ASK: How would you describe either each one of your siblings or each one of your children? (Q1)

ASK: Have you ever become confused about which sibling or child said or did something in the past? (Q2)

The New Testament books are like two families. There are the four Gospels and there are all the Epistles. It is easy to get them confused and forget which one says what. This lesson will give an overview of each of the books and challenge you to get to know some of the New Testament books a little better.

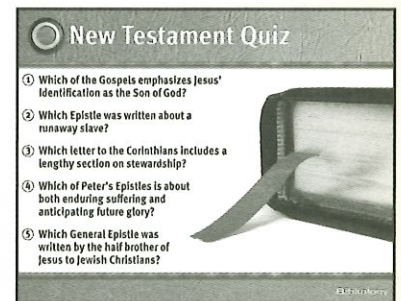
NT Quiz

RESOURCE: Display resource 12. Give the learners a few minutes to complete the quiz. Review the right answers: (1) John; (2) Philemon; (3) 2 Corinthians; (4) 1 Peter; (5) James.

ASK: How many questions did you get right?

ASK: How well do you know the theme of each of the New Testament books?

This lesson will give an overview of each of the New Testament books and will encourage us to be familiar with all of them, even the small Epistles, because it is all inspired by God.



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

The New Testament is a collection of twenty-seven writings composed over a period of about fifty years by less than ten different writers. The writers were either apostles or companions of apostles. The New Testament contains various *genres*, or types, of literature. For example, the Gospels are most like ancient biographies, the book of Acts is a history, the Epistles are letters, and the book of Revelation is an apocalyptic work.

I. The Gospels and Acts

The New Testament contains four books classified as the Gospels. The word *gospel* means *good news*, and these books relate the good news about Jesus Christ. The first three are known as the synoptic Gospels, since they share a similar structure and similar materials. All three synoptic Gospels discuss Jesus' Galilean ministry, then His journey south to Judea, and finally His ministry and last days in Jerusalem. In all three, Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ serves as a turning point in the narrative (Matt. 16:13–23; Mark 8:27–33; Luke 9:18–22). The fourth

Synoptic means to see together, having the same view.

Gospel, the book of John, is quite different than the others. John describes Jesus' ministry journeys back and forth between Galilee and Judea, and it contains many unique episodes in Jesus' life.

Matthew. Matthew makes a fitting bridge between the Old Testament and the rest of the New Testament since it stresses the Jewish character of Jesus. The book of Matthew emphasizes Christ's fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures, and the opening genealogy shows Jesus' position as a descendant of Abraham. Matthew's Gospel portrays Jesus as King and repeatedly refers to *the kingdom of heaven* (3:2, 8:11, 13:24). Matthew includes important lengthy teachings of Jesus, such as the Sermon on the Mount (5–7). The Gospel accentuates the concept of righteousness, and Jesus' authority is contrasted with that of the hypocritical religious leaders.

Mark. Mark was written by John Mark, a companion of Paul and later Peter. Unlike Matthew and Luke, which begin with Jesus' infancy, this Gospel immediately begins with Jesus' adult ministry. Mark highlighted Jesus' activity more than His teachings and depicted Jesus as the obedient servant.

READ: Mark 10:45. **ASK:** How does Mark describe Jesus' ministry? (Q3) *As a servant who came to minister and give His life a ransom for many.*

Mark emphasizes the final sufferings of Jesus, and almost one-third of the book describes the last week of Jesus' life.

Luke. Luke was a companion of Paul and wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. The book of Luke portrays Jesus as the Savior both of Jews and Gentiles.

READ: Luke 19:10. **ASK:** How did Luke portray Jesus' ministry? (Q4) *As the Son of Man Who came to seek and save that which was lost.*

Luke's Gospel also stresses Jesus' interest in the poor, the role of the Holy Spirit, and the importance of prayer. The book contains several famous parables, such as the parable of the Good Samaritan (10) and the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the Prodigal Son (15).

John. The Gospel of John was written by the apostle John, who appears in the narrative as the anonymous *beloved disciple* (13:23; 19:26, 27).

READ: John 20:31. **ASK:** What was John's stated purpose for his Gospel? (Q5) *That people might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*

John describes Jesus' miracles as *signs* of His true identity as God the Son, the Word, Who came into the world (1:1, 14; 20:28). Belief is the proper response to Jesus, since He is one with the Father. When one believes, he or she is *born again* and receives new life (3:3). The book also contains Jesus' seven *I am* statements: *I am the bread of life* (6:35); *I am the light of the world* (8:12); *I am the door* (10:7); *I am the good shepherd* (10:11); *I am the resurrection and the life* (11:25); *I am the way, the truth, and the life* (14:6); and *I am the true vine* (15:1). John's Gospel is the only one to rehearse such events as the wedding at Cana (2), the conversation with Nicodemus (3), the conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well (4), the raising of Lazarus (11), and the washing of the disciples' feet (13). John also con-

tains the Upper Room Discourse, in which Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit (13–17). Like all the other Gospels, John ends with the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus (18–21).

Acts. The book of Acts describes the birth and early growth of the church. Luke, the writer, appears within the narrative in the *we* sections. The early chapters recount the Holy Spirit's coming with power at Pentecost. After being empowered with the Holy Spirit, believers were to become witnesses *in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth* (1:8). The early chapters depict the Jerusalem church under the leadership of Peter and James, the half-brother of Jesus. The second half of the book focuses on the ministry of the apostle Paul. Paul took three missionary journeys in what is now Turkey and Greece. After he was arrested, he was taken to Rome as a prisoner.

II. The Pauline Epistles

The apostle Paul wrote more New Testament books than any other writer. His collection of letters is called the Pauline Epistles.

Galatians. The book of Galatians offers the reader a good introduction to Paul's teaching on theology in the areas of justification by faith alone, freedom in Christ, and life in the Spirit. The Galatians had been troubled by false teachers who attempted to bring them under the law and imposed circumcision for the sake of acceptance with God.

READ: Galatians 1:6–9. **ASK:** What did Paul instruct concerning the gospel preached by false teachers? (Q6) *He said to let them be accursed.*

Romans. Romans, the most systematic of Paul's epistles, discusses many of the same issues as Galatians. Romans describes God's righteousness as it is demonstrated in the gospel (1:17). Every human, both Jew and Gentile, is a sinner and is justly under God's wrath (1–3). But God justifies, or declares righteous, those who place their faith in Christ (4; 5). God's grace is not a license to sin, however, since the Holy Spirit has been given to enable the believer to live a holy life (6–8). Although it seems that God has set aside Israel in His plan of salvation, He has neither completely nor finally cast them off (9–11). A believing remnant survives, and in the future Israel will again experience spiritual blessing (11:26). The end of Romans concerns Christian living in relation to service (12), government (13), and those with differing convictions (14).

1 and 2 Corinthians. The New Testament includes two of Paul's letters to the church in Corinth. First Corinthians deals with a catalog of problems in the church. The Corinthian assembly suffered from disunity, immaturity, sexual immorality, lawsuits, questions about marriage, the issue of food sacrificed to idols, a lack of church decorum, and abuse of the Lord's Supper. Chapters 12 through 14 concern the nature and use of spiritual gifts, including the essential role of love (13). All things are to *be done decently and in order* (14:40). Chapter 15 is a lengthy discussion of the doctrine of the Resurrection.

Second Corinthians is a defense of Paul's ministry. Even in weakness, Paul boasted in the Lord Jesus and His grace and power (2 Cor. 4:5; 12:9). Paul encouraged his readers to be ambassadors for God's ministry of reconciliation (5), and he

discussed principles of Christian stewardship (8; 9).

1 and 2 Thessalonians. First and 2 Thessalonians were written to Paul's church plant in Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia. The two epistles primarily concern future events, since the church was troubled by various misunderstandings. Evidently, some of the Thessalonian believers were worried that their Christian loved ones who had died would miss the Lord's return.

READ: 1 Thess. 4:13–18. **ASK:** What truths did Paul spell out for the Thessalonians? (Q7) *That the dead in Christ will rise first, and then living believers will be caught up together with them to join the Lord in the clouds.*

In the meantime, the Thessalonians were to *watch and be sober* (5:6). They were to wait for the *Son from heaven . . . even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come* (1:10).

In the case of 2 Thessalonians, it seems that church members were afraid that the Day of Christ had come (2 Thess. 2:2), but Paul assured them it had not yet arrived. The Thessalonians were to continue working while they waited for Christ with expectancy (3:6–12). They were commanded to *stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught* (2:15). Christ would come again to Earth and take vengeance on His enemies (1:7–10).

Ephesians and Colossians. Colossae was located near Ephesus in what is modern-day Turkey. Both Colossians and Ephesians depict the relationship between Christ and His Body, the church (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18). Both describe putting off the old man and putting on the new man (Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9, 10). Both also exhort various household members to fulfill their rightful duties (Eph. 5:22–6:9; Col. 3:18–4:1). Ephesians emphasizes the *walk* of the believer (Eph. 2:2, 10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15). The letter also relates the believer's election to spiritual blessings in Christ (1) and details the Christian's spiritual armor (6). Some type of heresy had influenced the church in Colossae. The Colossians were tempted to worship angels, and so Paul accentuated the preeminence of Christ (Col. 2:18, 19).

Philemon. At the same time that Paul composed Colossians, he also wrote Philemon. Paul was writing on behalf of Onesimus, a slave who had run away from his owner, Philemon, and had later converted to Christ. Paul petitioned Philemon to receive Onesimus back no longer as a slave, but as a beloved brother (16). The apostle offered to pay any debt incurred by Onesimus (18, 19).

Philippians. The final Prison Epistle is Philippians, written to the church at Philippi in Macedonia. In this book Paul highlighted unity in purpose and love (1:27–2:2), joy and rejoicing (4:4), and humility (2:3, 4). In a beautifully poetic passage, Paul exalted Jesus as an example of humble service (2:5–11).

READ: Philippians 1:21. **ASK:** What was Paul's personal testimony regarding his purpose in life? (Q8) *For him to live was Christ.*

1 Timothy. First Timothy refers to Timothy as Paul's *son in the faith* (1:2). Paul encouraged Timothy to be exemplary in his character and conduct (4:12). Along with this encouragement, Paul described proper prayer and worship (2), outlined the requirements for church offices (3), and gave an overview of church administration (5).

2 Timothy. In 2 Timothy the apostle seemed to anticipate an impending martyrdom (4:6). Paul commanded Timothy to pass on the faith to the next generation and to disciple others (2:2). Timothy was to be diligent in his personal life, to preach the Word, and to *reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine* (4:2).

READ: 2 Timothy 4:1–4. **ASK:** Why was Timothy to be careful to preach the Word? (Q9) *The time would come when some would not endure sound doctrine but would seek teachers who would tell them what they wanted to hear.*

Titus. Titus was Paul's son *after the common faith* (1:4). Paul's letter to him stressed the need for sound doctrine (1:3; 2:5, 10) and emphasized God's love, mercy, and grace (3:4–7).

III. The General Epistles and Revelation

The next grouping in the New Testament is the General Epistles, which were written by several different men to various audiences.

Hebrews. Hebrews is the largest General Epistle. While some Bible teachers believe that the apostle Paul wrote Hebrews, no writer's name is mentioned in the text itself; therefore, the writer's identity has been debated. The writer described his work as a *word of exhortation*, a phrase sometimes used of sermons (13:22; cf. Acts 13:15). Hebrews exhorts its readers toward spiritual maturity (Heb. 5:11–6:1) and warns against neglect, unbelief, and apostasy. The book of Hebrews also offers doctrinal truths about Jesus Christ: He is superior to angels, Old Testament leaders, and Jewish ceremonies. As both High Priest (4:14, 15) and perfect sacrifice (10:11–14), Jesus is better than the Old Testament sacrificial system.

James. The book of James offers practical counsel on living out one's faith in everyday life. Faith outwardly demonstrates itself in action (2:14–26). The writer James described impartiality (2), godly speech (3), submission to God and the proper use of riches (4; 5), patience and prayer (5), and wisdom and endurance in suffering (1).

READ: James 1:22. **ASK:** What important point did James make concerning the Word? (Q10) *To be doers of the Word and not hearers only.*

1 Peter. First Peter deals with endurance in suffering. The words *suffer* and *suffering* appear fifteen times in this short letter, but Peter also highlighted the believer's future glory (1:7; 4:13; 5:10, 11). Thus Peter expounded a confident hope in the face of trials (1:3, 13, 21; 3:15). According to Peter, the very hardships Christians face can become opportunities for witness (3:13–17).

2 Peter. The subject matter of 2 Peter concentrates on false teachers. Second Peter warns of the final judgment upon false teachers (2), but it also reaffirms the second coming of Christ (3). Until Christ's return, the readers were to *be diligent* and to *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (3:14, 18).

Jude. The short epistle of Jude also opposes false teachers and uses many of the same Old Testament illustrations of judgment as 2 Peter. The ungodly opponents had departed from the faith and had espoused immoral lifestyles (4). Therefore, Jude exhorted his readers to *earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints* (3).

1, 2, 3 John. The apostle John wrote three General Epistles, probably around 90 AD. First John shares many of the same key words as his Gospel, such as *believe, life, light, and love*. First John was written because of the presence in the church of some apostates (1 John 2:18, 19). These false teachers denied that Jesus Christ came in the flesh (4:2, 3). Because of this false teaching, John highlighted the importance of fellowship, the vital relationship between God and His children (1:3–7). John also wrote to those who remained in the church that *ye may know that ye have eternal life* (5:13). The believers' relationship with God was demonstrated in their love for one another and in their sound doctrine. Second John stresses the need for *walking in truth* because *many deceivers are entered into the world* (2 John 4, 7). Third John commends Christian hospitality and condemns a love of preeminence.

Revelation. John also wrote the book of Revelation. Revelation was written to seven churches in Asia Minor (2; 3). Like other apocalyptic literature, the book of Revelation recounts various angelic activities and vivid, symbolic visions (cf. Dan. 7–12). The bulk of Revelation describes the tribulation period when God's wrath will be poured out upon the inhabitants of the world (Rev. 4–19). God's judgments are arranged by seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls. Interspersed within these judgments are descriptions of major tribulation characters such as the Antichrist, the false prophet, the two faithful witnesses, and the 144,000 Jews. At the end of the Tribulation, the Lamb (Christ) will return to conquer His enemies at the Battle of Armageddon (19). He will bind Satan and rule for 1,000 years (20). Following one final battle, Christ will judge all unbelievers at the Great White Throne Judgment (20). Believers, on the other hand, will enjoy the glories of the New Jerusalem (21).

READ: Revelation 21:4. **ASK:** How does John describe life in eternity? (Q11)
There will be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Know Them Well

ASK: Which parts of the New Testament would you say you know well? (Q12)

ASK: What has contributed to that knowledge? (Q13)

More to Learn

ASK: What books in the New Testament do you want to learn more about? (Q14)

ASK: What steps will you take to learn more about those books? (Q15)