



The New Testament

The book of John opens as an ode to the Old Testament. “*In the beginning.*” Matthew and Luke have lineage lists that point to the Old Testament. Mark Begins with Jesus being the Messiah or Christ of the Old Testament. Mark then goes on to quote Isaiah. As I said last week, you cannot read the New Testament, without understanding the Old Testament. They are intertwined in themes and message. Jesus came to fulfil the law rather than to change it.

Yet, the New Testament is more than just the Gospels. They are the crowning glory, but are they? The four gospels tell us about Jesus. Many people have their own ideas of who Jesus is to them. However, the real history of Jesus is only found in these gospel books. You will not find Jesus’ story anywhere else. Yet, what Jesus meant to the world is found in the rest of the New Testament. Paul and the other writers were forever affected by the risen Christ. Our theology is manifested through these men as they came to understand what Jesus and the relation to the Old Testament meant to them.

Each Gospel begins with a connection to the Old Testament. Yet, they all have a few things in common. They each give a view on the birth, life, death, and resurrection of the Christ. This Christ is Jesus to them. The Jewish religion does not generally recognize Jesus as their messiah. However, Jesus has affected men in their Jewish religion. The overarching theme of the

Gospels is “who is Jesus.” In general, Jesus confused them all from disciples to Pharisee. Nobody really understood what was happening. Would we?

The first three books of the New Testament are called the Synoptic Gospels because they each share various amounts of scripture. There is great debate on who wrote first. The Book of John is said to be written last, hence the chronological order. However, these four books are considered scripture because they were written by someone close to Jesus. They also share the same story and view point of the Christ. Each gospel is a different window to the same event. These books are written to a certain audience based on Jew/gentile, king, suffering servant, savior, and God. Yet, in reading these books over and over there is so much more to know about who Jesus is.

The next section of the New Testament is the Acts of the Apostles. It is the history of the foundation of the Christian church. Jesus taught in Jewish synagogues. Paul reasoned with these rulers about Jesus. We must remember that Jesus did not come to abolish the synagogues or change Jews to gentiles or gentiles to Jews. Jesus affected 13 Jewish men who later established the Christian church. The Book of Acts is the narrative of how that came into being.

The book of Acts opens with Jesus rising into the clouds. The second chapter illustrates how the Holy Spirit came down to indwell within humans who believed. Jesus had said that this would happen and it did. As we read further into Acts at verse 58 of Chapter 7, we find the stoning of the first Christian martyr: Stephan. Yet, tucked within this verse is the first mention of a young man named Saul. This Saul would become the Apostle Paul in the next two chapters. From there the gospel spread all over the region.

I would like to mention that the letters of Paul and the epistles of the apostles come from the spreading of the word about Jesus. Although the book of Acts is considered history, the whole New Testament book is Christian history. The message of grace was given from Jesus to the Jews. Yet, in Acts 2, gentiles received the Holy Spirit too. The missionary journeys of Paul further that message all over the region. The remaining letters of the Apostles also continues to drive home to the young church the gospel message.

These men were Jewish. They grew up knowing the Jewish history. They knew of the messiah. Each one had listened to their elders talk about the Law of Moses. They knew what God was to them. Yet, Jesus came and drove them deeper. Their letters to the church reflected a deeper meaning. Much of the theology of God and the Christ come from that knowledge. They saw how the Old Testament and Jesus fit together. Realize that I did not say New Testament. These men had only the old books to draw from. Their letters and gospel accounts were not commissioned at that time. They had no idea that their writings would become a second part to the Bible as we know it.

A lot has been said about the last book of the Bible called Revelation. It is a message that is not easily understood. Yet, God had warned of the coming judgment for sin from the beginning. How was a gracious God going to redeem His people? To redeem the world? So many people have an opinion on the account in Revelation. Yet, how does John see the future that was shown to him. I have tried to describe something I know little about. You know that thing or what-u-ma-call-it. We have tried to interpret what John saw but he describes everything by a limited understanding of what it was.

I have listened to a Jewish/gentile podcast. The Jewish man has said repeatedly that his people do not know the outcome. They are just waiting on God to redeem them. The book of

revelation tells us the ending. We have a hope that God will fulfill that end. In the meantime, we get to know the God of the Old Testament. Jesus brings God the Father to life in the New Testament. The in-dwelling of the Spirit gives us more hope and more clarity of what God is doing. We can see that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Nobody comes to the Father except through Jesus. The first part of the Bible tells us how we got here. The New Testament gives us a path home.