

Note

Introduction to the New Testament – Part 1 of 1

Summary

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The picture of the gospel, is the salvation of Christ, was seen throughout the OT. The old order, the patriarchs, prophets, princes and priests all failed. A new order was needed, the prophet, priest and king Jesus. The NT was written over roughly 50 years. It was written in Greek, consisting of 4 gospels and 23 epistles. The 4 different gospels had 4 different audiences. They are not typical biographies, as one third of them focuses on His death, the most important event in history.

Transcript

Introduction to the New Testament – Part 1 of 1

Today, we move into the New Testament. We thank God for our journey through the Old Testament. Let's do a quick review of the Old Testament before we enter the New Testament.

The Old Testament is about three-quarters of the entire Bible, in terms of volume. It is written by about thirty over authors over a span of a thousand years.

There are lots of stories, maybe 70%; and a lot of poetry - 30%. All kinds of characters wrote the Bible, some strong persons, some very gentle people, and yet with all that variety, there is a unity. It keeps pointing to the day when God will build a beautiful Kingdom and we would have a wonderful King, Jesus Christ.

So there is variety, and yet there is unity. It is very much the style of Almighty God, the Trinity, three in one, three persons - Father, Son, Holy Spirit, very different persons. And yet one God.

The Bible reflects the Trinity-variety and unity. Many people cannot reconcile the two. For them, God is one. But if we see nature, there is a huge amount of variety in nature. And yet, there is the beauty of unity, we call it ecology.

And we are just beginning to study ecology. In the past we'd never quite grasped it. We wonder why there is this plant next to this plant or this marine life next to this marine life, or why there is even bacteria in us? It is part of us and if you take away that bacteria, we actually cannot survive! So there's a macro ecology, there's a micro ecology, there is marine ecology, there is botanical ecology, but it all comes together. There's unity, in other words, they work together.

And so the Bible is a perfect picture of a beautiful book, reflecting God's variety and God's unity, the Trinity.

Now the Old Testament has 39 books as far as we Protestants are concerned. But if you are talking to a Catholic, you will realize that their Old Testament has 51 books. If you talk to an Orthodox Christian, maybe even more books, or a Coptic Christian from Egypt, even more Old Testament books; but all have the 39 that we have.

What is the purpose of this Old Testament? It lays the foundation for us.

Many Christians, when they open the Bible, ignore the Old Testament and jump into the New Testament. And so their faith lacks foundation. And so you find they go into cults like hypergrace, or the prosperity gospel, or all kinds of strange cults over the centuries. Any building you build without a strong foundation will tilt either to one side or the other. A strong foundation keeps the building upright. But over time, if a foundation is not good, it will become bent-*too much grace, too much judgment*. And what you have is the strange heresies of Christianity.

So it's good we have a good foundation.

The Old Testament is also full of prophecies pointing to a future kingdom, a glorious kingdom, and a glorious King. The problem with the Old Testament is when you read those prophecies as the Jews did, it's very hard to tie up. It's almost like a jigsaw puzzle - full of pieces! It's very hard to fit the pieces in the jigsaw puzzle into one completed jigsaw puzzle. But if you cheat and look at the cover of the jigsaw puzzle box, where you see the completed picture, then you can very quickly fit the pieces together quite easily.

In other words, you peek into the box first, and then you do the jigsaw puzzle. It's easy. So for us as Christians who have seen the King already in His first coming, it's much easier to understand most of the prophecies, but we can't understand all of them because we haven't seen the Second Coming of Jesus which are also prophesied.

So the prophecies regarding the first Coming - He will come as a suffering Savior, He will die for our sins, He will be hanging between two criminals; He will be buried and rise on the third day... all those things we have seen. It's very easy. We cheated. We looked at the box already.

The Second Coming in books like Daniel and Ezekiel, Zechariah and many of those books... we struggle to figure it out because we can't get at the box yet. We haven't seen that; we haven't gone there yet.

I play jigsaw puzzles with my granddaughters and I'm much faster than them because they don't realize they need to see the box. They just look at the pieces, and they try to fit and press and it doesn't get in.

The Bible gives these prophecies, and when we try to figure them out without having peeked at the cover first, we actually struggle and we all come up with complicated conclusions of a lot of the prophecies, and there's a lot of energy among Christians arguing about who is right. I would recommend don't spend too much energy on prophecies about heaven, about the future. They are things we have never seen yet, and so it's difficult.

Prophecies that are fulfilled for us – that's very easy. Not yet fulfilled - very difficult. Now, there's always a question among Christians - that God is two different Gods in the Old Testament and the New Testament-many people would say that - I read the Old Testament and God seems to be very harsh, very judgmental. He is doing all kinds of terrible things in the Old Testament. And then you say God is the same God and the New Testament He is quite different. I have to admit that it is true.

In the Old Testament, you see God's judgment, God's holiness and His judgment far more, with glimpses of His grace. In the New Testament, you see far more of the grace of God with glimpses of His judgment. Now you say, is it the same God? Has He changed over the years?

No, no, no, it's a different audience. In the Old Testament, He was talking to people, I would call, like going to school. I used to watch how the principal of the school would deal with kids when they first came to school. The principal would look very strict to all the students. In fact, the principal looked more like the disciplined mistress rather than a principal. You can't do this! I want to warn all you children, You must do this, Why?

That same principal, who was also the principal of the bigger kids, when she talked to the bigger kids, was quite different. The reason is that when you are dealing with sinful people (and children are sinful, mischievous, naughty, disobedient), you have to set rules. You have to tell them if you break those rules, I will punish you.

Now as kids grow up, hopefully, there is less need for you to show your judgmental side, your harsh side. It's the same principal but a different audience - kids have grown up and now you can talk to them and you don't have to say, Oh, you follow this rule, or you follow that rule.

When I was young, there were very strict time tables for me every day in class. As you grow up and go to the office as an older person, you don't have strict timetables. You're just given general rules, and your manager expects you to know what to do. He doesn't have to say, All right, come in this morning, from eight to eight-thirty. This is what you do! I want you all to dress this way in the office. And then at 1030, you take a break, have a cup of coffee, I want you back by 1045! I don't think you would deal with an adult that way.

So as God dealt with people, the human race, He dealt with them first by showing His strict side that He is a holy God. He expects people to obey Him. And as they mature, He dealt with them differently. Same Father, same God. I want you to know that even when God is harsh, and judges, He's still the God of love. Because a father who loves you, and see you do something really wrong that will harm you in the long run will punish you. Love is always two-edged. It hates things that will hurt you and harm you. And it rewards you for things that you do right. It punishes you for wrong and rewards you for right. That is the two sides of love.

So please don't think that God has changed. No, it's just the audience - from a very immature audience who have no concept who God was. All along the early days, people's idea of God was basically idols. And God had to teach them that I'm not an idol! I am a Holy God, I have standards. You can't just have an idol and do what you like, He is not blind like an idol and so on. I hope you will see that it is not two Gods, but one and the same God dealing with two sets of people.

What have we learned in the Old Testament? We have learned that for thousands of years from the Garden of Eden, God has been very, very patient with man. God has been very faithful to what He said He would do. And we also see how good God has been to all of us. Very forgiving - just keeps on going, patiently, for thousands of years.

Look at the Old Testament at the Garden of Eden. When Adam sinned, what did God do? He killed an animal because Adam was afraid and

ashamed he was naked. God killed an animal, got the skin of the animal and gave it to Adam and to Eve to cover themselves. There was the hint there – Adam, you sinned, some poor substitute has to die because of your foolish sins.

That was the introduction to the Savior who would die for us. And then immediately after that, the story of Abel and Cain. Abel brings a sacrifice and God is pleased with him. Cain brought the fruits from the harvest of his land. God was not pleased with that. What does that tell us? You want to come before God? You need to bring a substitute sacrifice - someone dying for you.

And we see men become so evil and wicked and then God brings a flood. And even in the flood we see the ark - one boat, not many boats. One door. Every animal go through that one door into that one boat, it speaks of one salvation-there is no other way to be saved from God's wrath except through one Savior.

We see that right through and then they get wicked again at the tower of babel. And then God scatters them. And God says, I'm just going to deal with one person, so He chooses Abraham.

Abraham was chosen. He blesses Abraham and says, Through you, I promise you this, all nations will be blessed. And then we see from there the children slowly going down and we see Christ, the descendant of Abraham. Then through Abraham comes the nation of Israel. And God says, you be my model nation. And He saves them out of Egypt and we can see almost the whole salvation message, the gospel message, good news message in the exodus exit from Egypt. The blood - sprinkled on the door frame, the Passover. No blood = death. Blood = saved. They go through the waters and they're saved through the blood, they escaped. And then they go to Mount Sinai, and in Sinai, they're given the Law.

So we learnt a foundational truth. You cannot obey the law until you're first saved. We must understand this foundational truth, because a lot of Christianity today is like, Oh, you want to know Jesus, stop smoking, stop drinking, stop doing this. I give you the law first before the Christ. No!

You really want to have your life changed? Very simple. Realize you're a sinner. And you need Christ. Without Christ you will never fulfill anything that is good. You keep doing wrong. You don't change. You receive

Christ and He will change you. That is the gospel message. You realize you need Christ. You realize you're a sinner. You need the Lamb. You need the Blood. Then you will be saved. That is the gospel message.

So salvation first, then the law. All this is in the Old Testament. These are foundational truths, but today Christians still haven't figured that out.

Then at Sinai, He tells them to build a tabernacle. And what's the tabernacle? It is nothing more than a building, a tent in the beginning, with a huge altar in the front. The first thing you see is ONE door in the whole tabernacle. You know, most houses have many doors – front door, back door, side door, but this tabernacle has one door. Again - ONE way to God through Christ.

We enter the tabernacle, and what do you see? A big altar! What do you see on the altar? There's blood, blood, everywhere! Animal sacrifices every day, literally innocent lambs are brought there! Slaughtered! Blood splashes out. As if that is not enough, they collect the blood and splashed it everywhere around the altar. What was that telling us?

You need the blood of Jesus to save you and when the Jews saw all that blood, then one day when they saw the bloody sacrifice on the cross, they knew that was the Lamb of God.

And after the sacrifice, the altar, then there was a basin of water to help you get your life clean. So you need the Lamb first and then the Word of God to clean your mind so that you can have a life that is right. Then when you're right, you could enter the tent, the tabernacle and come into the presence of God.

So all this has been throughout the Old Testament. You need Christ first, then you need the Word of God to clean your life up. Then you have wonderful enjoyment of fellowship with God.

Then we see the nation of Israel going through different periods - first the Prophets... all the prophets (Moses was a prophet) right down to the judges, one by one, right down to Samuel - 500 years, all failed. Everyone of them. Moses failed too. The best of the lot - he failed. He disobeyed God.

The prophets of 500 years failed. Then, after the prophets, Samuel anoints a king. From then on it was Saul, and David, and Solomon and a whole bunch of kings. They also failed, everyone, including the best of them all, David.

And then God sends them to exile. And from the time of the exile, there were no more kings. They were under another kingdom, the Assyrians, the Babylonians. And the priests all failed also.

From the beginning... the patriarchs - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, all failed. And we have the prophets - Moses right down to Samuel – all failed. And then we have all the kings – Saul right to Jehoiachin all failed. So what do you have? We need a new order of things. Someone who can be a perfect Prophet, Prince and Priest. Prophet, King and Priest - Jesus Christ.

The kingdom of Israel failed miserably. We need a new king, a new Prophet, a new Priest for a new kingdom. And then we come into the New Testament - the Gospels!

We see the last word in the Old Testament in Malachi is.. if you don't obey, you will have a curse - utter desolation. Cursed! And then for 400 years after Malachi, there was silence, God doesn't say a word.

And then John the baptist, (after 400 years, no prophets, no word from God) and then a man comes up, looking pretty strange, wearing camel hairsuit, living in the wilderness, eating wild honey and locusts. At last a prophet after 400 years of silence, and who does he point to? When he saw Jesus, He says, Behold, the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world.

They had seen lambs at the tabernacle, later at the temple - slaughtered, slaughtered, slaughtered. And still, their life was miserable, and empty and hopeless. And then John the Baptist says, Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, and that introduces the Gospel.

So I hope you see here, the last book of Malachi told them, Watch out for Moses, who was the one that gave you the law. And remember Elijah? I will send an Elijah.

400 years of silence. And then John the Baptist came. Is this Elijah that was promised by God through Malachi?

Let's now come to an introduction of the New Testament.

Now the New Testament is 27 books, whether you're Catholic or whether you're orthodox, we all agree, it's 27 books. We don't disagree in the New Testament.

The Old Testament was written over a period of 1,000 years, at least. The New Testament was written just over probably over 50 years, from AD 50 to AD 100. Some say a bit longer.

The New Testament is basically the Gospels – 4 'biographies' of Jesus, and the rest of it - 23 other books are basically letters, or epistles written to people who believed in Jesus now had to learn how to live out their lives, because salvation is not about exit from hell. Not a passport to heaven, but about being Christlike. Not saved from hell, but saved from hell to Christlikeness. The 23 epistles were written to help you to be more like Christ.

So 4 books about Christ, 23 books about how you can be more like Christ. So that's basically the New Testament.

Acts is about how the gospel was spread throughout the world. And then after that, there were Pauline epistles - Pauline means epistles written by Paul... 14 of them. And there were 7 general epistles, letters written by others. And finally, the conclusion of the book, Revelation.

So this is one unified story or testament pointing to the hero, and the hero pops up in the gospels. And then the hero is going to do some things in our life and finally culminate in what He told us He would do, that glorious, eternal kingdom where we will be with Him and God forever, and ever.

Now, the New Testament is written in a different language. The Old Testament was basically written in Hebrew, a little bit of Aramaic, Books like Ezra, Daniel, Jeremiah were in Aramaic. What in the world is Aramaic? Hebrew was the language of the Israelites. Now you must remember Israel is a very small place, and it became smaller and smaller with less and less influence. So it was like became like a dialect of a group of people. But they were conquered by other nations, and the powerful nation that influenced them was from Mesopotamia, Assyria and Babylon, and Aramaic was the language that was from them.

Related to Hebrew. Related very much like, you know, if you're Chinese, you say, Hokkien and Teochew, you still can understand each other. You can guess a lot of words, or if you're Filipino, you speak Cebuano or Ilongo or Visaya.

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, but parts of the Old Testament needed the other non Hebrews to read it, and they wrote that in Aramaic.

At the time of Jesus, the power was no more Babylon or Assyria, so Aramaic had become a local dialect. Because Alexander the Great conquered all of them, the dominant language was Greek. The Greeks were great philosophers, thinkers, and people looked up to the Greeks as very intellectual people. The Greek language dominated, but the locals would speak Aramaic in that era. It was their common language in what we would call the Middle East today.

But if you were a Hebrew, in your own village, you spoke Hebrew. Then when you went out of your village to meet someone who is not a Hebrew, you probably spoke Aramaic. And then if you wanted to talk about intellectual things, you would probably speak Greek at the time of Jesus.

So Jesus probably was trilingual. He knew Hebrew because he knew the Scriptures. He probably spoke a lot of Hebrew in his local situation. Then when he moved out of his local city, he probably spoke Aramaic. That would be like the common language.

Then when you want to talk about more intellectual things, you probably use Greek, in official documents etc. Very much like today, many of us who speak dialect at home, then in the old country speak you maybe a national language, and we go abroad you speak English, right? That's kind of pretty normal. So the New Testament is written in Greek, they called it Koine Greek – it means Common Greek, not high class Greek. Not classical Greek. So it's written in more common vernacular Greek, understandable by many, many educated people.

We move on now to the four gospels. What is the meaning of the word gospel? The word gospel is simply from an English word meaning good or god spell. It simply means good news. Old English godspell means good news.

Gospel is a direct translation from the Greek word Evangelion i.e. evangel. Evangel means declaration of Good News. Now commonly this is what Evangelion means.

Whenever there was some breaking news that would change your life, in those days, people would go out and herald... proclaim the good news. For example, if your king won a battle against an enemy who would have destroyed you completely, the heralds, the messengers will go out and shout the good news. We have won! Our lives are safe for ever! That is the good news.

So basically, the gospel is a declaration of the Good News-the Messiah has come! We have the Lamb of God that will save us has come! Our life will never be the same again for eternity! That's the good news! That's how we are supposed to share the good news! Declaration aloud! Shout it out!

The trouble when we read the Bible, we read like it's bad news. You know, we look like we're reading a lamentation. It's not how we're supposed to read the Gospels.

Why were the four gospels written? The four gospels were written because Christianity was now spreading very fast after the resurrection of Christ, and when persecution happened in Jerusalem, believers were scattered. As they got further and further away, telling about the good news, people wanted to have reliable accounts. How do I know what you're saying is true? They were witnesses by mouth. Word of mouth spread about the wonderful Messiah, how He died and rose again, how people had seen Him rise from the dead. And that news was spreading. And now the people were saying, hey, all the eye witnesses were already dying. We want a reliable account. If all the eye witnesses die, how do we even check out the story? And so people desired written documents about this amazing good news.

The first Gospel written was most probably by Mark. Most people agree it's Mark. It was written quite long after the death and resurrection of Jesus because when they were scattered, they just ran everywhere telling the good news, about how their life had been changed, and people believed them. As they went further and further away, people wanted some proof and so Mark wrote it down.

Why four gospels? Because they were for four different types of audience or four different angles to show Christ. When you want to write about somebody, let's say you want to write about me, you could write about me from the angle as a doctor, as a preacher, as a father, as a business leader, to different audiences. Basically, they wanted to show Christ in different angles to different audiences. So four gospels, but the first three are very similar. In fact, I think the framework for the first three is Mark. Mark wrote first, and then Matthew, and Luke used that framework and expanded on it for their particular purposes. So there's a lot of similarity. The first 3 Gospels are called synoptic Gospels, the three of them sort of saw Christ from a pretty much similar angle, with slight variation. The fourth one, the Gospel of John is totally different. The events are related but the style is very different, etc. So four gospels-three are related, synoptic gospels; fourth separated-quite different.

Now, for purposes of understanding, Matthew was put first in the Bible though Mark was written first, because Matthew wrote it for the Jews. So Malachi ends. And then Matthew shows Jesus as the fulfillment of all the Old Testament. So it's like a natural flow-in.

So Matthew is put first, though he's not the first book written. Matthew probably wrote it very likely for the Jews, because the largest number of believers in the early church were Jews, that's obvious because the gospel was preached in Jerusalem. Thousands believed and then it was scattered. Now when Matthew wrote this book, his first book, there was a lot of persecution in the synagogues, throwing out the Jews who now were Christ believers, Messianic Jews (they believe in the Messiah to come.)

So they were thrown out, and Matthew wrote this to tell them hey, you're not denying your Jewish faith. In fact, you are very much the fulfillment of everything in the Old Testament, so he wrote it to comfort them.

The second reason why Matthew wrote it was because the Gentiles now dominated. By the time Matthew wrote it, there were more Gentile believers than Jewish believers. And so many Gentile believers began to dominate the church and look down on the minority, the Jews. People always look down on the minority, the Jews. And Matthew wanted the Gentiles to realize, Hey, don't forget your roots. You Christian who are listening to me today - Don't forget your roots. Jesus was a Jew. Don't make fun of the Jews. Your roots are Jewish. Your spiritual roots are

Jewish. You're saved through a Jewish Messiah. He didn't just pop in from nowhere. Matthew's book was put first for these reasons.

Now, Matthew writes of Christ as King of the Jews. They had waited for a King for a long time. The last king was like hundreds of years ago, six or seven hundred years ago. The king they had now was Herod, an Edomite. So he wrote of Jesus as King of the Jews.

Mark wrote Jesus as Son of man.

Luke wrote Jesus as Savior of the world.

John wrote Jesus from the angle of Son of God.

Another way to look at it is: Matthew shows Jesus as King, Mark shows Jesus as servant, Luke shows Jesus as man, John shows Jesus as God.

That's another angle, because it's also correct. Note that people want eyewitness accounts. But in actual fact, the four gospels, only two were really eyewitnesses. Matthew was an eye witness. He was an apostle. John was an eyewitness. He was an apostle. They were with Jesus. So they wrote from an eye witness account. Mark was not an apostle. Mark was a disciple of Peter. So he got his news secondhand from an eyewitness. He probably never knew Jesus personally. Luke was not an apostle. He was a Gentile. In fact, the only Gentile writer in the entire New Testament. He knew about Jesus from his mentor, Paul. And interestingly, Paul was not an eyewitness either, or was not one of the twelve. So Luke got it from Paul, who got it from probably, eyewitnesses.

But anyway, just giving you the facts that while they wanted reliable accounts, they got reliable accounts, but not directly. Two of them directly from disciples, two from indirect sources, but nonetheless, all inspired by God.

If you want to use the Gospels to help people, let me suggest to you if you want to reach unbelievers, please don't use Matthew or John.

If you want to reach unbelievers, use Mark, or Luke. Short, crisp. Unbelievers can understand it's written for them.

Matthew was written, I believe, for new believers. And John was written for matured believers. I noticed a lot of people start with unbelievers the book of John. It's difficult to understand - the beginning was the Word the Introduction to the New Testament

Word was God. God the Word was God. I mean, just the first three verses, you're like, ah, what's that? If you're reading Mark or Luke, quite simple, even an unsaved person could understand it and follow it. And in due time, God can work in his heart, The Word of God is powerful. Different books have different angles and different goals, for different audiences.

Now let's have a quick intro into Matthew, before we go into the next lesson.

Who is Matthew? Matthew is one of the disciples, also one of the original apostles.

He's not very well known as an apostle. In fact, we don't see much of him in action as an apostle except the very beginning, right when he was called from his tax collector's booth, and then he went and had a big feast of his old buddies to introduce his good new friend Jesus. Other than that there is very little about him. As an active apostle. He was not the talkative dominant type like Peter. He was not one of the favorites like Peter, or John, or Andrew.

Matthew was an accountant. Don't forget that he counts money. And accountants are very detailed people, and remembers lots of stuff. And so he probably wrote a very long document. What's the goal of writing this book? The goal is always at the end - Make disciples. So Matthew's book is for new believers. What is the first thing a new believer should do? Share his faith. And make disciples.

If you don't start as a new believer making disciples, you will be an old believer, spending time in Bible studies and never makes disciples. I've seen that a lot. New believers are never taught to make disciples. They're taught to attend classes until that becomes the norm. Their Christianity is class attendance. And they don't even know how to deal with people outside the Christian circle. And so we have what we call Greek Christians, because they like to talk among themselves, debate about the rapture, about things, and all that kind of stuff, just like Greek philosophers, talk and talk, no action. But Matthew is for new believers. In fact, I see the book of Matthew, almost like a disciple-making manual - how to share your faith.

Are the Gospels really the biography of Jesus? It's not a typical biography about the life of someone. One third of all the Gospels is about His death.

The four gospels are not a typical biography. The focus is His death, because His death is the greatest event of all, the love of God, the judgment of God, the salvation of man, the turning point of man. So one third of the biography focuses on the passion and death of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus.

I hope you have a good overview of the Old Testament and the New Testament and the Gospels. We will move on into the book of Matthew.

God bless.