

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

Quick Review of the Old Testament

1. The Old Testament constitutes about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Bible in terms of volume.
2. It was written by about 30 over authors over a span of a thousand years
3. 70% of the Old Testament are stories and 30% are poetries.
4. Yet, we see unity in the entire Old Testament that keeps pointing us to the day when God will build a beautiful, everlasting kingdom with Jesus Christ as the King. There are varieties, yet unity, in the Old Testament.
 - a) Father, Son, Holy Spirit are three different persons yet One God. This reflects the “variety and yet unity” in the Bible.
 - b) There is a huge amount of varieties in creation and yet unity of one ecology in creation E.g. why a certain marine life is created to be next to certain animals and why some bacteria must exist in human bodies, etc. There is macro-ecology, micro-ecology, bio-ecology, mechanical ecology, etc. but all are in unity and they work together.
 - c) Therefore, the Bible is a beautiful book that reflects God’s variety and unity even in the Trinity.
5. There are 39 books in the Old Testament that the Protestant Christians use. However, the Catholic has 51 books in the Old Testament of their bible version and hence many more books than the 39 in our Old Testament. But, all our 39 books are in the Catholic bible.
6. What is the Purpose of the Old Testament?
 - a) It lays the foundation for us! Christians who jump directly into the New Testament lacks foundation and ends up with cults preaching the prosperity gospel, etc.
 - b) Any building without a proper foundation will tilt towards one side or the other! Likewise, cults will end up with either too much grace or too much judgment! A strong foundation is needed to keep the building upright.
 - c) The Old Testament is also full of prophecies pointing to a glorious Kingdom and the future King. It’s almost like a jigsaw puzzle with many pieces in a box. It is very hard to immediately see what the full picture is unless you look at the cover of the jigsaw puzzle box. This will help you fit the pieces together much quicker and more easily.
 - d) Unlike the people who had only the Old Testament before Christ’s 1st coming, it is easier for Christians to understand most of the prophecies as we have seen Jesus’ 1st coming. Even so, we still find it hard to put together the prophecies about His 2nd coming as we do not yet have the full picture on the cover of the jigsaw box for His 2nd coming. It is, therefore, fruitless to spend too much time arguing about the future events which we are uncertain.
7. Are there two different Gods in the Old Testament and in the New Testament? For example, some people say that they read about a harsh and judgemental God in the Old Testament but a graceful God in the New Testament.

- a) While it is true that the Old Testament shows more of God's judgement than grace compared to the New Testament, it is not two different Gods but one same God.
- b) The difference in emphasis is due to the different target audience of the Old Testament and the New Testament:
- i. For example, we will observe how some school principals talk differently to young kids and older kids.
 - ii. For rebellious kids, the principal must set strict timetable and rules. As the kids grow up to become adults e.g. in the office, only general rules are stated because there is less need to show the harsh side!
 - iii. So, our Holy Father shows His strict side first, just like any earthly father who sets rules not to do certain things. As Christians grow up and become mature, less rules need to be given. Regardless, God is love even if He is strict! It is like an earthly father preventing his kid from going wild! How do earthly fathers love their kids?
 - They hate things that will harm their kids. They will punish their kids so as to prevent them from doing things that will harm themselves.
 - They will reward their kids if they do right!
 - iv. It is actually two sides of the same LOVE.
- c) Therefore, the people of God is progressing from an immature audience in the Old Testament (who has no idea of who God is), to become a mature audience in New Testament. Hence, whether it is Old Testament or New Testament, it is the same God who never change.

What did we learn from the Old Testament?

1. From Adam in Eden to now, God is patient and forgiving for thousands of years.
2. God killed an animal to cover Adam and Eve in Eden after they sinned. It is a hint of someone having to die for their foolish sins.
3. God was satisfied with Abel's offering versus Cain's offering. It tells of the need to bring an animal sacrifice offering to come before God, and again hints that someone must die in our place.
4. God has to judge men by a great flood when men turn evil to the extreme. God saves via one Ark (one boat, not many boats), one door that every animal has to enter through! Jesus is the door that is mentioned in John 10:9. There is only one way to be saved from God's wrath and that is through one Saviour, Jesus.
5. In the story of the building of the Tower of Babel (in the book of Genesis), God scattered the people and He chose to deal with only one person, Abraham, and God promised to bless all nations through Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. (Also, see Galatians 3:8.)
6. Christ descended from Abraham. Israel came through Abraham and was meant to be a model nation for God.
7. God saved Israel out of Egypt.
 - a) This is the parallel to the Good News or the Gospel. The escape from Egypt and the blood of the Passover lamb to escape the death of the first born of

- the Israelites! Israel was saved and they went through the waters of the Red Sea and reached Mt. Sinai.
- b) The Israelites were given the Law at Mount Sinai.
 - c) It is clear that the Law was only given after the Israelites were saved, hence, even Christians must be saved first before they can obey the Law! Not the other way around, the Law does not save.
 - d) We must understand the foundational truth i.e. not stop sinning then go to Christ. You must realise that you are a sinner first and that you need Christ, then you can receive Him by faith and He will change you from inside out. It is not your own effort to save yourself by obeying the Law first.
8. God then told them to build a Tabernacle which, again, has only one door and one big altar for animal sacrifices. Blood from animal sacrifices was splashed everywhere around the altar on a daily basis.
- a) This signifies the need of the blood of Jesus for one to be saved! Jesus is the Lamb of God. This is Justification.
 - b) After the altar, there is a basin of water for cleansing! This signifies that the Word of God has to cleanse us! Jesus is the Word of God. This is Sanctification. Justification must happen before Sanctification. Then we can go into the presence of God and have wonderful fellowship with God.
9. Then, Israel went through the following periods as a nation:
- a) Prophetic Age of about 500 years. All the prophets (including Moses) failed.
 - b) King or Prince Age (namely Saul, David, etc.) of about 500 years. Again, all kings, including King David, failed. Even all the priests failed.
 - c) Exile period to Babylon.
10. Basically, everyone failed, including the Patriarchs namely, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- a) There is a need for a perfect prophet, prince (king) and priest.
 - b) Jesus Christ is that perfect Prophet, King and Priest for a new Kingdom.
 - c) Hence, the New Testament!
11. The last word from God in the Old Testament was Malachi 4:6 which effectively meant, "If you don't obey, you will be cursed." God commanded the Israelites in Malachi 4:4-5 to remember the Law of Moses and to wait for Elijah whom God will send.
12. Then, there was 400 years of silence.
13. Then, John the Baptist came to preach about repentance and judgement. John the Baptist said of Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" The Gospel was introduced by John the Baptist who was the Elijah promised in Malachi 4:5 in the Old Testament.

New Testament

There is a total of 27 books:

1. While the Old Testament was written over a period of at least 1000 years, the New Testament was written and completed over only 50 years (about AD 50 to AD 100).

2. There are 4 Gospels or biographies of Jesus, who is the Lamb prophesized in the Old Testament.
3. The other 23 books are Epistles or letters to instruct how believers are to live as followers of Christ. We are not just saved from hell but saved to be more like Christ. Hence, these 23 books (Epistles) will teach us to grow in Christlikeness.
 - a) The book of Acts shows how the Gospel was spread.
 - b) There are 14 Pauline epistles (epistles or letters written by Paul).
 - c) There are 7 general epistles written by other authors.
 - d) The conclusion is in the book of Revelation.
4. The entire Bible is in one single story pointing to a hero (Jesus Christ) and what He will do to achieve an eternal Kingdom.
5. The Old Testament was written mostly in Hebrew and some Aramaic.
 - a) Hebrew is like a dialect of Jews and it is becoming less in use.
 - b) Aramaic is a Mesopotamia language related to Hebrews. Aramaic is used by non-Jews who are able to read. For example, it is used in the book of Esther in the Old Testament.
6. However, in the New Testament times, language wise,
 - a) Aramaic was no longer the main language in the Middle East because Babylon and Medo-Persia were no more the main powers. Alexander the Great had conquered most of those countries, so the commonly used language was Greek at that time. The Greeks were intellectual and were philosophers, hence, their language dominated.
 - b) Therefore, the Jews spoke Hebrew only in their own villages and Aramaic in towns outside of the village of their residence. They spoke Greek when conversing in high class matters (E.g. official documents). The commonly used Greek language at that time was called Koine Greek. Koine Greek is common Greek. It is not classical Greek used by the most educated people.
 - c) Therefore, Jesus was probably trilingual and used different languages depending on where He visited. It is like Singaporeans who speak different languages or dialects depending on the occasion.

The 4 Gospels

The word "Gospel" means "Good News" in English.

1. It is the direct translation of the Greek word "Evangelion" which means declaration of Good News.
2. In the old days, if the king won a battle, the messenger would shout the "good news" that meant "Our lives are saved!"
3. It is the declaration that the Saviour, the Lamb of God has come to save us! Our life will never be the same again for eternity. So, we should also shout out the Good News!

Why 4 Gospels instead of just one?

1. Because Christianity was spreading very fast after Christ was crucified and resurrected. Believers were scattered and people needed reliable accounts rather

- “word of mouth” witnessing. Furthermore, most eyewitnesses were dying. So, written documents were desired.
2. The Gospel of Mark was actually the 1st Gospel written. It was written quite long after Jesus was resurrected!
 3. But why is there a need for 4 Gospels?
 - a) 4 types of audience.
 - b) 4 different angles to show Christ to different audiences. E.g. you can write about Pastor Paul Choo as a doctor, a preacher, a father or a business leader, etc.
 4. The first 3 Gospels are very similar to one another and 2 of them were using the Gospel of Mark as the framework! The Gospel of Mark was written first, then the Gospel of Matthew followed by the Gospel of Luke.
 - a) These 3 Gospels are called Synoptic Gospels.
 - b) “Syn” means “synthesis” (or to put together).
 - c) “optic” means “eye”.
 - d) So, Synoptic Gospels mean seeing Christ from the same eye!
 5. The 4th Gospel of John is very different from the 3 Synoptic Gospels. It does not adopt the Gospel of Mark as the framework.
 6. Although the Gospel of Mark was written first, the Gospel of Matthew was placed first in the New Testament as it was written to the Jews and it flows well from the last verse of Malachi 4:6 in the Old Testament. It is also because initially, most believers were Jews (as the Pentecost Day happened in Jerusalem as mentioned in the book of Acts).
 7. At that time, there were lots of persecution of the Messianic Jews by non-believing Jews! Apostle Matthew wrote this Gospel to confirm that the Jews are not denying their Jewish faith, in fact they are believing in the fulfilment of the prophecies in the Old Testament!
 8. Another reason for Matthew writing this was that the Gentiles dominated the Church at that time! There were more Gentiles in the Church by then and these Gentile believers looked down on the minority Messianic Jewish believers. Mathew wanted the Christians to know their roots! Jesus is a Jew! Gentiles are saved through a Jewish Messiah.
 9. The 4 Gospels portrayed Christ differently:
 - a) Matthew portrayed Christ as King of the Jews because the Jews were waiting for their King. The last king they had was 600 years ago! King Herod was a fake Jew as he was an Edomite. Hence, Matthew portrayed Christ as King.
 - b) Mark portrayed Christ as Son of Man and as Servant.
 - c) Luke portrayed Christ as Saviour of the world and as Man.
 - d) John portrayed Christ as Son of God and as God.
 10. Facts about the authors of these 4 Gospels.
 - a) Only 2 of these 4 Gospel authors were eyewitnesses. They were Matthew and John who were first-hand apostles under the discipleship of Jesus Himself.

- b) Mark was the disciple of Peter, hence, Mark got 2nd hand information from Peter.
- c) Luke was a Gentile and he was the only Gentile author in the entire New Testament. Luke got his information from Paul but Paul himself was also not an eyewitness of Jesus' 3 years of ministry on Earth.

However, all the 4 authors were inspired by God.

11. To reach unbelievers, it is best not to use the Gospels of Matthew and John, but use the Gospels of Mark or Luke. The Gospels of Mark and Luke are easier for the Gentiles to comprehend.
12. While the Gospel of Matthew was written for the new believers, the Gospel of John was written for matured believers! Even the first 3 verses of John Chapter 1 are so difficult to understand!
13. Hence, it is important to realise the different purposes and different target audiences for the 4 Gospels to be used effectively.

Introduction into the Book of Matthew

1. Matthew was one of the 12 apostles. Not much information is given about him except that when Jesus called him to be his disciple, he was called Levi then. . We also have record about Levi's invitation to his friends to meet Jesus. He was not an active apostle.
2. He was an accountant by training. Hence, he keeps very detailed records.
3. The goal of Matthew is in Matthew 28:19-20, also known as the Great Commission:
 - a) For new believers to go and share their faith as well as to make disciples.
 - b) New Believers' classes should not be about class attendances, otherwise they will become Greek Christians who debate a lot but no action.
 - c) The Gospel of Matthew is like a disciple-making manual.

Question: Are the Gospels biography of Jesus?

No, this is not a typical biography which is about the life of someone! Because here, 1/3 of every Gospel is about Jesus' death. The focus is Christ's death which is the greatest event because it is about Salvation and the turning point of mankind.