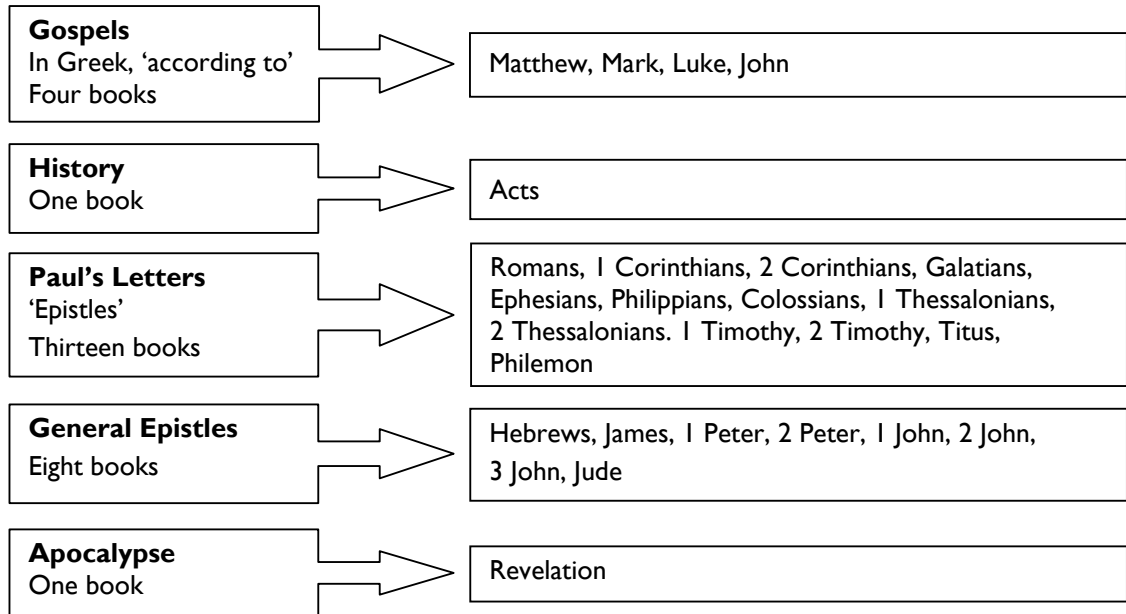


Part 2: The New Testament

WHAT'S ON THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKSHELF

The Main Groups of Books

The 27 books of the New Testament can be grouped as follows.



The Types of literature – Genres

We see a variety of genres in the New Testament, just as we do in the Old Testament. So when we want to understand the New Testament we need to bear in mind what kind of writing we are reading. The main genres are:

Gospel (e.g. Mark) – By and large, it was the early Christians who invented this genre, though there were early precursors elsewhere. A number of so-called gospels didn't make the cut (e.g. the gospel of Thomas). Gospels contain a mix of narrative (story), sayings of Jesus (teaching), parables, and bits of interpretation or 'explanation' by the gospel writer. They all give eye-witness accounts of the life of Jesus as seen by the writer personally, or, in Mark's case, as reported by the eye-witnesses (probably mostly Peter). The target audience needs to be born in mind, and remember that each gospel writer has their own particular emphasis and purpose which gives each selection and arrangement of material its own distinctive flavour. Matthew, Mark and Luke are usually called the 'synoptic' gospels since they share most of their material and so appear to be written from the same ('syn') viewpoint ('optic').

Narrative (Acts) – the story of the growth of the church from Jerusalem; but like Old Testament narrative, it's a story that fits in with the flow of God's work so it makes theological points.

Epistles (e.g. 1 Corinthians) – most letters were written by Paul; most were written to churches; some were to individuals (e.g. 1&2 Timothy). They guide, teach, encourage, correct, and build people up in righteous living amidst persecution. Understanding the background to each letter is vital to making sense of its overall themes and of particular passages. Generally, the letters address practical problems faced by young Christians in relatively recently planted churches. The problems are always approached in the light of the gospel, so practical instruction is interwoven with doctrine. The Letter to the Hebrews is probably a collection of **sermon** material and James is often regarded as an epistle with the character of Old Testament **wisdom** literature.

Apocalyptic (Revelation) – vivid imagery and visions with a culturally well-understood code of colours, numbers, etc. written to help persecuted believers in what is now Turkey. More information later!

Part 2: The New Testament

Tonight

1. The 'New Testament'
2. What's on the New Testament bookshelf
 - a. The main groups of books – the list
 - b. The types of literature – the genres
3. What happens in the New Testament books
 - a. The Spreading Flame – Paul's Ministry and the growth of the church
 - b. Book-by-book – the key verses

1. THE 'NEW TESTAMENT'

What makes the New Testament, or 'covenant' different from the Old?

Remember from Part 1 that the 'Old Covenant' was the one that God made through Moses with the Israelites at Mount Sinai, enshrined in the 10 commandments and the instructions that follow in Exodus. Although the Israelites reaffirmed their commitment to the covenant when they arrived in the Promised land, most of the Old Testament is the story of God's people breaking that covenant.

So in the Old Testament God promises a new covenant. How will it be different; how will it be better? Two passages in the Old Testament prophets give us a great way to understand the differences: Jeremiah 31:31ff and Ezekiel 36:24ff.

Here are 6 features of the new covenant from these passages – there are many others elsewhere, notably to do with a new kingship that will be God's kind and peaceable Kingship rather than the old unfaithful and 'rip-off' kingship (Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34) and with the difference between the law and the Spirit.

1. **Internal transformation rather than external application**
 - a. Clean souls (Ez. 36:25&29 and Jer. 31:34)
 - b. A new heart and spirit (Ez. 36:26)
 - c. God's Spirit is within us to teach us from within (Jer. 31:33)
 - d. God's Spirit within us motivates us to obey from within (Ez. 36:27)
2. **International rather than national**
 - a. Abundant life witnesses to the nations (Ez. 36:28ff)
 - b. All nations will know that God is the Lord (Ez. 36:22ff)
3. **Intimacy with God rather than distance from God**
 - a. You will be ... I will be ... (Ez. 36:28 and Jer. 31:33)
 - b. Knowing the Lord personally (Jer. 31:34)
4. **Indestructible covenant rather than a broken one**
 - a. Everlasting and eternal, never to be destroyed by our rebellion (Jer. 31:3 & 32; also Isaiah 55:3 & 61:8)
5. **Initiated and Inaugurated by God rather than sustained by the people**
 - a. God's word and God's work (in both passages God promises and he says 'I will ...')

So how will these new covenant blessings come about?

First, through the central figure of the new covenant, who established it through his blood on the cross. So in Hebrews Jesus is called the mediator, or 'go-between' of the new covenant.

Remember what Jesus said at the last supper? 'This is the new covenant in my blood.' Then through the pouring out of God's Spirit upon people at Pentecost, fulfilling the new covenant promise found in Ezekiel 39:29 and another Old Testament prophecy in Joel 2:28. And then through the preaching of the good news to all nations. Hence gospel accounts of Jesus life, death and resurrection; the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people (commanded by Jesus, enabled by the Spirit given at Pentecost and begun in the rest of Acts); and finally the international gathering of all God's people in Revelation.

Part 2: The New Testament

PAUL'S MINISTRY (See the maps overleaf)

First Journey - Into Galatia AD 46 to 48 (Acts 13 and 14)

Planted churches in
Pisidian Antioch
Iconium
Lystra
Derbe
?Perga
Wrote
Nothing!

Second Journey - Into Greece AD 49 to 52 (Acts 15:40 to 18:22)

Planted churches in
Philippi
Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9)
Berea
Athens
Corinth (Acts 18:1-18)
Ephesus
Wrote
1&2 Thessalonians (from Corinth)

Third Journey - Round the Aegean AD 53 to 58 (Acts 18:23 to 20:38)

Revisited many churches
including Thessalonica (Acts 20:1-3)
Wrote
Galatians (from Ephesus)
1 Corinthians (from Ephesus)
2 Corinthians (from Macedonia)
Romans (from Corinth)

Imprisonment in Caesarea then Rome AD 59 to 63 (Acts 21:17 to 28)

Wrote
Philippians
Ephesians
Colossians
Philemon

Probably A Final Journey AD 63 (?) to 67 (starting point is Acts 28:30) **Visits Crete and Macedonia; re-imprisoned and martyred in Rome**

Wrote
1 Timothy
Titus
2 Timothy (from prison in Rome)

27 Keys to unlock the New Testament

Bible Book	Main theme	Key Word	Key verse in book
Matthew	Words and deeds of Jesus	King	'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.' 28:18
Mark	Jesus' mission	Servant	'The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.' 10:45
Luke	An accurate life of Jesus	Son of Man	'The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.' 19:10
John	Believe in Jesus	Son of God	'God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son.' 3: 16
Acts	Life in the early church	The Holy Spirit	'You will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth.' 1: 8
Romans	God's gift of righteousness	The righteous	'The righteous will live by faith.' 1: 17
1 Corinthians	Grow in God's grace	Sanctification	'Jesus ... our righteousness, holiness and redemption.' 1: 30
2 Corinthians	Jesus' death on the cross	Reconciliation	'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us.' 5: 21
Galatians	There is no other gospel	Freedom	'It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.' 5: 1
Ephesians	Living in unity	Grace	'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith.' 2: 8
Philippians	To live is Christ	Joy	'Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!' 4:4
Colossians	Christ is supreme	Christ	'For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.' 2:9
1 Thessalonians	Jesus will return	Imitate	'The Lord himself will come down from heaven.' 4: 16
2 Thessalonians	Expecting Jesus' return	Day of the Lord	'(Do) not ... become easily unsettled or alarmed.' 2: 2
1 Timothy	Advice for Christian leaders	Instruction	'Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture.' 4: 13
2 Timothy	Paul instructs Timothy	Endure	'Endure hardship.' 2: 3
Titus	Advice to young ministers	Teach	'Make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive.' 2: 10
Philemon	Have your slave back	Forgiveness	'Welcome him as you would welcome me.' 17
Hebrews	The superiority of Christ	Better	'We have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens.' 4: 14
James	You need faith and action	Active faith	'Do not merely listen to the word ... Do what it says.' 1: 22
1 Peter	When you are persecuted	Endurance	'Do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering.' 4: 12
2 Peter	Enemies from within	Be alert	'Do not forget ... be on your guard.' 3: 8, 17
1 John	Live in fellowship with God	Fellowship	'God is love.' 4:8
2 John	Beware of false teachers	Watch out	'Do not ... welcome him.' 10
3 John	Live in fellowship with Christians	Faithful	'Work together for the truth.' 8
Jude	Beware of false teaching	Contend	'Build yourselves up in your most holy faith.' 20
Revelation	Things that will take place	Revelation	'If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in.' 3: 20

Symbolism in Apocalyptic Literature

or why a thousand doesn't mean a thousand!

THE SYMBOLISM OF COLOURS

COLOUR	SYMBOLISM	EXAMPLES
White	Divine world – resurrection – victory – dignity	The Son of man and his white head and hair (1.14) The white stone of the conqueror (2.17) The white garments of the faithful (3.4, 5, 18; 6.11; 7.9, 13; 14.14; 19.14) Twenty four elders clothed in white (4.4) White horse (6.2; 19.11) The white horses of the heavenly armies (19.14) The white cloud of the Son of man (14.14) The white throne (20.11)
Black	Disaster – distress	The black horse (6.5) The black sun (6.12)
Red	Bloody power – violence	The bright red horse (6.4) The bright red breastplate of the angels who sow death (9.17) The red dragon (12.3)
Green	Death	The green horse (6.8)
Purple	Debauchery	The great harlot (17.4) The cargoes of the merchants of Babylon (28.12) The great city (Babylon: 18.16)
Scarlet	Debauchery	The same figures (17.3-4; 18.12,16)

THE SYMBOLISM OF NUMBERS

One – first	Exclusiveness, primacy, excellence: 'I am the First and the Last', 1.17; 2.8; 22.13
Half – three and a half	Limited time, restricted period: silence of about half an hour, 8.1; a time and times and half a time (12.14); three days and a half (11.9, 11)
Four	Universality (the whole of the inhabited world): four winds ... four corners of the earth.
Six	Imperfection: 666 (13.18)
Seven	Fullness, perfection, totality: seven churches of Asia, seven spirits (1.4), seven golden lampstands (1.12), seven stars (1.16), seven burning lamps (4.5), seven seals (5.1), etc
Twelve	Representatives of the tribes of the chosen people: continuity of the new people with the old: twelve stars crowning the woman's head (12.1), twelve tribes, twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve seated figures, twelve names, twelve apostles (21.12, 14, 20, 21)
A thousand	A large number, a multitude: thousands of thousands of angels (5.11); twelve thousand of each tribe The thousand years 20.2-7): an extended period, a long time.

