

GRACE BIBLE TRAINING CENTRE (GBTC)
SCHOOL OF MINISTRY
ARUSHA - TANZANIA

SUBJECT: BIBLE SURVEY

LESSON 3: NEW TESTAMENT

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Introduction: -

At the time the New Testament was being written, the Old Testament picture had changed very much. The days of the prophets were gone, and many people were indifferent to spiritual things. Like the rest of the Near East and Europe, the Jewish nation came under Roman rule. Though it was a difficult time for the Jewish people and they longed for freedom, outside influence did offer some benefits. A strong Roman army saw to it that roads were safe for commerce, and increased travel allowed Greek culture with its music and art to spread throughout the empire.

It was not by chance that God sent His Son to the world at this time. The Greeks furnished a common language for communicating the gospel and the Romans gave reasonable protection and liberties for evangelism.

The New Testament is the story of the life of Christ and the beginning of Christianity. The New Testament books contain instructions and promises for all believers, prophecies concerning the future, and the hope of eternal life with Christ.

Read these books to learn their truths firsthand.

New Testament Classifications

In Lesson 2, we learned that the Old Testament has 5 major classifications. The New Testament also has 5 classifications.

The 27 books of the New Testament are grouped as follows:

Gospels	-	4 books
History	-	1 book
General Epistles	-	8 books
Pauline Epistles	-	13 books
Prophecy	-	1 book

GOSPELS	HISTORY	GENERAL EPISTLES	PAULINE EPISTLES	PROPHECY
Matthew Mark Luke John	Acts of the Apostles	Hebrews James 1Peter 2Peter 1John 2John 3John Jude	Romans 1Corinthians 2Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians 1Thessalonians 2Thessalonians 1Timothy 2Timothy Titus Philemon	Revelations

Explaining the Classifications

1. The Gospels

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote the life of Christ in the Gospels that bear their names. These writers are sometimes called the Four Evangelists. Each has a different focus or emphasis.

The first three Gospels are called “synoptic” as they give a synopsis or a complete view of Jesus’ life. They are similar in their choice of events to relate. John, however, does not emphasize the history of Jesus as much as His sayings and teachings.

Matthew presents Jesus as King, or Messiah. Quoting the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah (the name the Jews gave to their expected king or deliverer), Matthew shows how Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures.

Mark wrote to the Romans, most of whom did not know the Scriptures. He filled his gospel with dynamic action as he showed his readers that Jesus came as the Servant of God.

Luke, a physician, wrote his Gospel for a Greek friend. He emphasized Christ’s perfect manhood, presenting Him as the Son of Man.

John gives evidence to show that Jesus is the Son of God and that those who believe on Him have eternal life.

2. History

Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles to tell how Christ sent the Holy Spirit to continued His work on earth after Christ went back to heaven.

Apostle means “sent” or “one who is sent.” Acts tells how the sent ones of the Lord took the gospel to their world.

One of the main persons in the book of Acts is Paul. He was the apostle to the Gentiles. Gentiles were people who were not Jews. Luke went with Paul on some trips and told of their exciting missionary adventures. He tells of how the Holy Spirit used Paul to start the Christian church in many countries.

The key text is Acts 1:8. Every Christian should memorize it: "*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*" (Acts 1:8).

3. Pauline Epistles

The 13 Pauline Epistles are letters Paul wrote, some of them to churches he had founded. The book of Hebrews was not signed, so we cannot say definitely that Paul wrote it. Most scholars do not feel he did, so we are not including Hebrews in the list of Paul's Epistles.

Since there were no printing presses, the Epistles were passed from church to church. It is possible that at each place the members made a copy to keep and study.

Romans has been called "the cathedral of Christian doctrine" because of its clear, powerful explanation of salvation. Justification by faith is its theme.

Paul wrote *1 & 2 Corinthians* to the church he had founded in Corinth. These letters addressed problems of doctrine and conduct in the church.

The next Epistle, *Galatians*, has the same theme as *Romans*—justification by faith. It emphasizes that no one can save himself or herself by good works, only by faith in Jesus Christ.

While Paul was in jail for preaching the gospel, he wrote *Ephesians*, *Philippians*, and *Colossians*. These Epistles, called "prison Epistles," are about living the Christian life.

Both letters to the *Thessalonians* tell what will happen just before Jesus returns from heaven. You can read about His return in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18.

Four of Paul's Epistles are to individuals. The two letters to *Timothy* and the one to *Titus* are especially helpful to pastors.

Just before Paul gave his life for the cause of Christ, he wrote his last letter to Timothy, charging him to be faithful in God's work. Read 2 Timothy 4:5–8.

Onesimus, Philemon's runaway slave, was saved while he was in jail with Paul. Paul wrote asking *Philemon* to forgive Onesimus and receive him as a brother in Christ.

4. General Epistles

The Pauline Epistles carry the names of the persons to whom they are addressed, but the general Epistles go by the names of the ones who wrote them. Since Hebrews was

an unnamed book, early editors assumed the audience was the Hebrew people. The early church then adopted the name Hebrews for this epistle.

Even though *Hebrews* has been included in the New Testament from the days of the early church, scholars today are somewhat divided on who actually wrote the epistle. Authorship has been traditionally ascribed either to Paul or Barnabas—both of whom were capable of providing this material. Although we are not certain of the authorship, no question should exist as to the book's divine inspiration and usefulness for the body of Christ.

The key word of Hebrews is "better." This letter to Hebrew Christians reminded them that the new covenant is better than the old. Hebrews shows how the symbolic rites and sacrifices under the Law were pictures of Jesus, who became our high priest and the supreme sacrifice for our sins.

James, author of the book that bears his name, was pastor of the church in Jerusalem. This James was also probably the brother of Jesus. James, John's brother, had already been beheaded.

James teaches that living faith in Christ will produce good works. Our works do not save us. But if we are saved, we are expected to do what we can for God and His people.

Peter's letters of encouragement for suffering Christians remind them that the Lord will come back someday and reward them for their faithfulness.

John, the beloved disciple, lived the longest of the twelve. He wrote a gospel and three Epistles bearing his name. The theme of God's love that makes us love one another carries through all his writings. He also wrote Revelation, the book that reveals Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Jude, the last Epistle, was written by a brother of James and probably also a brother of Jesus. He warns the reader against false teachings and speaks of Jesus' return to judge the world.

5. Prophecy

The book of *Revelation* is also called the Apocalypse because it unveils the future. Its symbolic visions are similar to those in the book of Daniel. John, the author, was an old man in exile on the island of Patmos when he was given visions of the last days of this age, of heaven, and of the coming kingdom of God.

Though John had known Jesus when He carried out His earthly ministry, he saw Jesus again as the mighty conqueror. John saw Jesus as the one who holds all authority (Revelation 1:18).

As the revelation of Christ changed Patmos into the doorway of heaven for John, it also brings light into our darkness, joy into our lives, and hope into a chaotic world.