

New Testament Overview

The Christian Bible is divided into two parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The word “*testament*” can also be translated as “*covenant*” or “*relationship*.” The **Old Testament** describes God’s covenant of law with the people of Israel. The **New Testament** describes God’s covenant of grace through Jesus Christ. When we accept Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we enter into a new relationship with God.

The New Testament contains twenty-seven books which can be divided into four major groups:

- ❖ **The Gospels:** “Gospel” literally means “good news.” Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell the good news of Jesus’ birth, life, death, and resurrection. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as the “synoptic” gospels—“synoptic” means “with the same eye.” Their narratives are very similar. Scholars believe that Mark was written first. Matthew and Luke based their gospels on Mark but added their own material. John takes quite a different approach from the other three gospels. The gospels are not really biographies—their primary goal is to communicate the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ.
- ❖ **The Acts of the Apostles:** The fifth book of the New Testament is often referred to as “Acts.” It records the history of the New Testament church and the spread of Christianity after Jesus’ resurrection. The first chapters focus on the Jerusalem church and the original apostles. The latter part of Acts focuses upon Paul’s missionary journeys. The author of Luke’s Gospel also wrote Acts. Reading Luke and Acts gives a good overview of Jesus’ life and the early church.
- ❖ **The Epistles:** “Epistle” is a Greek word for “letter.” Much of the New Testament contains letters sent by various church leaders to the churches under their pastoral care. Most of the letters were written by the apostle Paul. Two of the letters—James and Hebrews—can also be classified as sermons. Although the Gospels come first in the New Testament and recount Jesus’ life, many of the New Testament Epistles were most likely written before the Gospels were published.
- ❖ **Revelation:** “The Revelation of John” is typically referred to as “Revelation.” (No “s” on the end.) The first section records seven letters sent to the seven churches of Asia Minor by Jesus the Christ. The remaining portion of the book describes John’s vision of the final days. Many people get caught up in the details, attempting to cross-reference the imagery and events with contemporary history. Remember the letter is written to churches undergoing persecution by the Roman Empire. The overarching message is simple: “God wins!” No earthly power can ever overcome the church.

Mnemonics: “Mnemonics” serve as methods for memorization. Here are a few mnemonics to help find the books of the New Testament. “God’s Electric Power Company” stands for “Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians.” The first letters of the phrase give the order of the books. A second mnemonic is that all of the “Ts” are together in the New Testament: 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, and Titus. Isn’t God good!?!

Bible Chronology of the New Testament

The following chronological list is adapted from *The Chronological Bible*. The dates are disputed here and there; but overall, they can give you a reference in time and order.

Jesus is born	5 B. C. Matt. 1; Luke 2	The life of Jesus Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
Flight to Egypt	4 B. C. Matt. 2:13-18	
Childhood at Nazareth	Luke 2:40	
In Jerusalem at 12	Luke 2:41-50	
John the Baptist	Matt. 3; Mark 1; Luke 3	

Jesus' Baptism	Matt. 3	5 B.C. - 29 A.D.
Temptation in the wilderness	Matt. 4	
Turns water into wine	John 2	
First cleansing of the Temple	John 2:13-22	
Jesus and Nicodemus	John 3:1	
The woman at the well	John 4	
Galilean ministry	Luke 4:14 ; John 4:43	
Miracles by the sea	Matt. 8	
Visit to Jerusalem	John 7	
Jesus anointed by Mary	John 12:8-11	
His triumphal entry	Matt. 21	
Cleansing of the Temple	Matt. 21:12	
Cursing of the fig tree	Matt. 21:18	
Judas agrees to betray Christ	Matt. 26:14-16	
Preparation for Passover	Mark 14:12-16	
Institution of the Lord's supper	Luke 22:14-23	
Jesus washes the disciples' feet	John 13:1-17	
Jesus prays at Gethsemane	Mark 14:26-42	
Jesus is betrayed and arrested	John 18:2-11	The Crucifixion to The Ascension
Jesus is tried and condemned	Matt 26:57-68	
Peter denies the Lord	Matt 26:58 ; 69-75	
Jesus before Pilate	Matt. 27:11-14	
Jesus before Herod	Luke 23:6-12	
Barabbas released	Mark 15:6-15	
Jesus' walk to Golgotha	Matt. 27:32-24	
Jesus is crucified	Matt. 27:35	
Darkness at noon	Mark 15:33	
Jesus dies	Matt. 27:50	
Jesus' body entombed	John 19:42	
Resurrection	Luke 24:1-8	
Women visit the tomb	Matt. 28:1	
Stone rolled away	Matt. 28:2-4	
Message of angels	Matt. 28:5-8	
Christ appears to disciples	Mark 16:14	
The Great Commission given	Matt. 28:19-20	
Jesus' ascension	John 20:26-29	The Ministries of Paul and Peter 29 - 67 A.D.
Pentecost	Acts 2	
Conversion of Saul (Paul)	Acts 9	
Peter imprisoned and delivered	Acts 12:1	
Death of Herod	Acts 12:20-23	
Paul's 1st missionary journey	Acts 13:1	
Council at Jerusalem	Acts 15:1-12	
Paul's 2nd missionary journey	Acts 15	
Paul's 3rd missionary journey	Acts 18	
Paul: Macedonia to Corinth	Acts 20	
Arrest of Paul	Acts 21	
Paul's fourth missionary	Acts 27	
Paul's first imprisonment	Acts 28:16	
Death of Paul and Peter	A.D. 67-68	
Temple at Jerusalem destroyed	A.D. 70	

Chart adapted from: <http://www.carm.org/christianity/bible/bible-chronology-new-testament>