



# WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

## LESSON 3: The New Testament

### Lesson Focus:

**The New Testament reveals how God's promises came true through Jesus.**

The Old Testament points to a promise that a King would come to earth someday. This King would be the Savior of the world. But at the end of the Old Testament, the King had not yet come.

The New Testament picks up the story of God's people where it ended in the Old Testament. It begins with the story of Jesus' birth, which took place about 400 years after the last story in the Old Testament. It explains that Jesus was the King that God had promised would come to earth.

The New Testament records the life and teachings of Jesus and the ministry of His disciples. It reveals that Jesus was the answer to God's promises in the Old Testament. It explains how Jesus brought spiritual freedom and hope to the entire world. It also shows Jesus' followers how to live a new life as they wait for Jesus to return.

1. What parts of the New Testament are the most familiar to you?



**Artwork by anonymous Crossroads student**

# The Writers of the New Testament

God spoke through the New Testament writers just as He spoke through the Old Testament writers. The writers were people who knew Jesus' story and were chosen by God to spread the good news about it. Some of the writers were Jesus' original disciples. Others learned about Jesus from the disciples. Some wrote firsthand\* accounts of Jesus' life and stories about how people began believing in Him. Some wrote letters to help the new believers learn how to follow Jesus. Those letters traveled all around the ancient world and eventually became books of the Bible.

The New Testament writers often included direct quotations from the Old Testament. The writers explained how God's promises in the Old Testament came true through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.\* God helped the writers understand how Jesus was central to God's plan to save the entire world.

## Parts of the New Testament

The New Testament contains four main sections: the **Gospels\***, the **book of Acts**, the **Epistles\*** (ih-PIH-sulz), and the **book of Revelation** (reh-veh-LAY-shuhn).

The first four books of the New Testament are the **Gospels**. The word "gospel" means "good news." The Gospels tell the good news about Jesus.

Three of Jesus' early followers each wrote one of the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and John. They recorded what they saw and learned during the time they spent with Jesus. The fourth Gospel, written by Luke, is different. Luke never met Jesus. Luke collected stories from people who had been with Jesus and knew about His life.

However, all the Gospels tell the same story. They all paint a picture of who Jesus was when He was on earth. They all end with the crucifixion\* and resurrection of Jesus. And they all share the true hope of the Gospel: that anyone who believes in Jesus will have eternal life through Him.

Read **John 20:11–31**.

2. What did John say was the reason God directed him to write down the stories in his Gospel (see verses 30–31)?



Notes/Questions

\* An asterisk after a word or phrase indicates that it is defined in the Glossary of Terms on page 7.

The second section of the New Testament is the **book of Acts**. The book of Acts records the actions of Jesus' apostles.\* It shows how God used the apostles to spread the Gospel message. It also describes how the early Church\* grew to understand that Jesus' message of hope and love was for anyone who would listen and believe in Him.

Read **Acts 2:1–41**.

3. What did Peter tell the crowd about Jesus (see verses 22–24 and 32–36)?

4. How did the people respond to Peter's message (see verses 37–41)?

The third section of the New Testament is the **Epistles**, or letters. Most of these letters were written to specific churches, addressing things that had happened in those churches. But much of the instruction they contained was helpful to all believers. So, the letters were copied and passed around to groups of believers in other churches all over the Roman Empire. They helped instruct, correct, and encourage the believers. They provided practical guidance about how to truly follow God. Reading these Epistles can help us figure out what it means to follow Jesus today.

Read **Philippians 2:1–4**.

5. What did the writer encourage the people reading this letter to do?

6. How can this passage help Christians today as we try to follow Jesus? How can you apply it to your life?

## New Testament Books

### GOSPELS

The Gospels contain accounts of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Matthew  
Mark  
Luke  
John

### BOOK OF ACTS

The book of Acts describes the actions of the apostles and the growth of the early Church.

Acts

### EPISTLES

The Epistles are letters written to encourage and guide the early Church.

Romans	1 Thessalonians	James
1 Corinthians	2 Thessalonians	1 Peter
2 Corinthians	1 Timothy	2 Peter
Galatians	<u>2 Timothy</u>	1 John
<u>Ephesians</u>	Titus	2 John
<u>Philippians</u>	<u>Philemon</u>	3 John
<u>Colossians</u>	Hebrews	Jude

### BOOK OF REVELATION

The book of Revelation contains a message about the future that God gave to the apostle John.

Revelation

The underlined books were written by people who were incarcerated. The writers were Christ-followers who encouraged other believers and built up the Church from inside prison.

## Message of Hope

The final book in the New Testament is called **Revelation**. Revelation was written by an apostle of Jesus named John. God sent an angel to give John a message about His plans for the future of His Kingdom.

The book of Revelation can be hard to understand because it uses language and religious images (mostly from the Jewish religion) that would have been familiar to the people of John's day but are not familiar to most readers today. The original readers were also familiar with the seven churches John addressed. The churches were in cities in the region where John was incarcerated on the island of Patmos.

Revelation was written about seventy years after Jesus' death. At that time, Christians had been suffering under the mistreatment of the Roman government for at least thirty years. John's letter to the churches was an encouragement not to give up because God was going to win in the end. In the last chapter of Revelation, John recorded these words from Jesus: "Look! I am coming soon! I bring my rewards with me. I will reward each



All the books of the Bible together tell this one story of redemption\* (rih-DEMP-shuhn) and hope. The Bible is God’s way of showing us who He is, telling us how to follow Him, and reminding us that He cares for us. Although it was written many years ago, its messages and promises still apply to us today.

9. What does it mean to you that God keeps all His promises?

10. Do you think God can speak to you through the Bible? Why or why not?



Video stills courtesy of BibleProject

## Action Step

Choose one of the passages you read during this lesson and read it again. Write down which passage you chose and answer this question: If you believe what the passage says is true, how do you need to change the way you live?

## Glossary of Terms

**Each lesson contains Bible names, terms, and ideas that may be new to you. We will do our best to provide definitions that are easy to understand. You will see an asterisk (\*) the first time each term appears in the lesson.**

**Apostle** — A follower of Jesus chosen to spread the message of the Gospel (see “**Gospel**”).

**Church** — A building used for worship or the name for all Christian believers as a group. When the second definition is used, the word is often capitalized (“Church”).

**Crucifixion** — The act of putting someone to death by nailing or tying their wrists or hands and feet to a cross.

**Epistle** — A formal letter that is written to instruct.

**Firsthand** — Coming from someone who directly saw or experienced something.

**Gospel** — The good news about Jesus Christ found in the Bible. The word can also be used to describe the first four books of the New Testament, which are written about Jesus’ life and ministry.

**Redemption** — The act or process of freeing people from their sins.

**Resurrection** — The act of coming back to life after death.

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Use this space for **prayer requests, questions for the mentor who will review this lesson, or comments.**  
You can also use this space to **write a poem or draw.**

**If your address has changed, please mark this box and write your *new* address below.**

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