

Survey of the New Testament

- **The New Testament:**

Authorship:

The NT is the inspired, infallible account of Christ's life (including His death, resurrection, and ascension) and of His continued and future work in the world (as recorded and instructed by the apostles). These accounts were written by human authors who were "carried along" by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21). Thus, Scripture is authoritative because of the source of the apostle's message, not because of their office. The Word can be trusted because the Holy Spirit is the primary author. We can be sure that following God's Word will never lead us astray but always direct us to godliness and eternal life.

However, there are human elements involved in the production of Scripture; there was a confluence in writing (both the Holy Spirit and human beings were fully involved in the process). The personality and gifts of the human authors were not squelched or suppressed. However, they were not co-authors with God, only His mouthpiece, using their own unique style and vocabulary. We can be assured that every word is infallible and authoritative because each word was written exactly as God intended.

The Name:

The "New" of New Testament refers to the new covenant. A covenant is an arrangement made by one party into which others can enter if they accept the terms of the covenant. The first 39 books of our Bible are predicated upon God's covenant with Israel. He said He would be their God and they would be His people...as long as they followed His conditions. This relationship was similar to the "Suzerain/Vassal" treaty of that time period. These treaties were between a lord (suzerain) and his servants (vassals); he would take care of them, provide them land, and protect them, as long as they abided by the terms stipulated in the agreement. We can see this parallel in the OT—God laid forth the terms of the agreement in the Law (1st five books).

The NT is a designation of a new relationship into which men may be received by God. God set Israel aside as His chosen people (until after His second coming), and now has provided a new means (anticipated in Jeremiah 31:31 and instituted by the Lord Jesus, 1 Cor. 11:25) by which all men can have a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

The names *Old* and *New Covenants* were thus applied first to the two relationships into which God entered with men, and then, to the books that contained the record of these two relationships.

Canonicity

The books of the NT were originally intended for a particular audience and were circulated among those communities. They were written either in response to some particular occasion or to inform that particular audience on a given doctrine or set of doctrines. But each was intended to produce godly living in the life of the reader.

These books were preserved by God and gradually collected throughout the course of the 350 years after Christ's death. Through thorough evaluation the 27 books of our NT were determined to be the only books that God had inspired. These books comprise the canon that is known as the New Testament. The early church tested each book's canonicity by four measures: ¹apostolicity (written by an apostle or close associate), universality (recognized and used by the churches), orthodoxy (content in agreement with revealed truth), and inspiration (marks of Holy Spirit's inspiration).

The books of the NT are not arranged in chronological order, rather they are in logical order. The Gospels give us the necessary knowledge of the grounds of our salvation—Christ's life and work. The book of Acts provides us with the historical accounts of how this "new" religion, which was possessed only by Jews in a small, localized community, had spread to the entire world. Romans propounds the doctrine and implications of salvation, knowledge which was necessary for this infantile religion. The remaining letters show the development of the doctrines of the church—the last few showing the churches problems and the entrance of destructive teachings (heresies). And the Testament concludes with the vision of the second coming of Christ in Revelation, which is our present hope and joy.

The Core of New Testament Theology

Jesus is the Messiah, and salvation requires faith in Him, complete submission under His Lordship, and perseverance in obedience in the true Gospel until He comes again. As one possessing salvation, you can exhibit a transformed life even in the midst of persecution, for Christ will bring glory unto Himself by claiming victory in the last day.

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