

The New Testament in 10 Minutes

Andy Naselli

The New Testament is the climax of one grand story, and that story begins with the Old Testament. The theological message of the Old Testament and the New Testament is unified. God reigns, saves, and satisfies through covenant for His glory in Christ. So let's walk through the New Testament section by section, book by book. What I'm going to do is give the theological message of every book of the New Testament and I'm going to be moving quickly, very briefly. We could take hours to unpack each of these statements, but we're going to move quickly. We're going to go section by section. The New Testament has 27 books and we'll look at it in five parts. So gospels, Acts, Paul's letters, Hebrews and general letters and then Revelation. Let's go.

Number 1. Gospels. The four gospels are biographies of Jesus, but they're not like biographies that we're used to reading because they don't tell us about Jesus' childhood development and education. They don't always use chronological precision. They're basically stories of Jesus' death and resurrection but with extended introductions.

So in the gospel according to Matthew, Jesus the Messiah King climactically fulfills the Old Testament. In the gospel according to Mark, Jesus, like Aslan, is on the move. Jesus the Messiah and Son of God is a suffering servant and a model for His followers. In the gospel according to Luke, Jesus the Messiah fulfills God's plan by seeking and saving the lost. And the gospel according to John is evangelistic. Jesus the Messiah gives eternal life to everyone who believes in Him.

Acts is history. It belongs with Luke's gospel as the second volume in a two-volume history of Christian beginnings, so Luke is volume one and Acts is volume two. The very word "Acts" denotes a style of literature in the ancient world that describes the great deeds of cities or people. So the book of Acts describes the beginnings of the church, and its message is that Jesus the Messiah continues to

fulfill God's plan by expanding the early church in the face of opposition through the Spirit's power.

So that's the gospels and Acts. Now let's look at Paul's 13 letters.

Romans is the greatest letter in the history of the world. The gospel reveals how God is righteously "righteousing" the unrighteous. That is, how God is righteously justifying unrighteous individuals, both Jews and Gentiles, at this stage in the history of salvation. This happens by faith in Christ apart from the law covenant and it happens ultimately for God's glory. Romans and the rest of the New Testament herald this gospel which has two parts: first, Jesus lived and died and rose again for sinners. And second, God will save you if you turn from your sins and trust Him. That gospel is what the New Testament heralds and that's the church's mission to herald that to all the peoples of the earth through the Spirit's power.

The message of First Corinthians is that God's holy people – all Christians – must mature. So as God's holy people become what we already are – holy – we will not tolerate sin. We will build each other up. We will strongly affirm Jesus' bodily resurrection. The theological message of Second Corinthians is that God shows His power through human weakness.

Galatians guards the gospel. Both Jews and Gentiles are justified by and continue to live by faith in Christ, not by the works of the law. According to Ephesians, the church – both Jewish and Gentile Christians – the church must maintain the unity that Christ powerfully created. Philippians exhorts God's holy people: conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel. Colossians heralds that Christ is supreme and that is the basis for the letter's many commands.

Paul wrote two letters to new converts in Thessalonica to encourage them in the faith. First Thessalonians: walk and live in light of Christ's imminent coming. And Second Thessalonians: persevere because Christ will return and set all things right, especially by judging His enemies.

And Paul wrote three letters to young pastors that we call the Pastoral Epistles. In First Timothy those in the church, especially church leaders, must oppose false teaching and be godly. In Second Timothy, Paul exhorts persevere for the gospel. And Titus exhorts do what is good by the grace of God.

And finally, Philemon is Paul's shortest and most personal letter. Its message is that you should love your Christian brothers and sisters regardless of social barriers by valuing them above yourself.

So that's the gospels, Acts, Paul's letters. Next is Hebrews and seven general letters.

The message of Hebrews is that Jesus is better so persevere. Don't fall away from the faith. Jesus is better than prophets, than angels, than Moses, than Joshua, than any high priest in the old covenant. Jesus' sacrifice is better than any under the old covenant. Jesus' Melchizedekian priesthood is better than the Levitical priesthood. Jesus' new covenant is better than any other covenant. Jesus is better so persevere.

According to James, faith works. That is, genuine saving faith must become evident in how we endure trials, in how we treat the poor, in how we speak, in how we relate to the world.

Two letters from Peter exhort Christians who are facing persecution and false teachers. First Peter: stand firm in God's grace. Second Peter: beware of false teachers.

And John wrote three letters. First John is a comforting letter about assurance of salvation. You can know that you have eternal life in three interlocked ways: by believing in Jesus, by living righteously, and by loving believers. That's first John. And then John wrote two more little letters and these exhort believers. Second

John: walk in truth and love by not supporting deceivers. And Third John: work together for the truth by supporting those who spread it.

And finally, Jude exhorts those whom God is keeping for Jesus. Contend for the faith against grace-perverting immorality.

So that's the gospels, Acts, Paul's letters, Hebrews and seven general letters, and finally His book of Revelation.

The purpose of the last book of the Bible is to comfort and encourage Christians by revealing future realities, future events, providing this heavenly perspective on present earthly difficulties. You could title this book "The Return of the King." We might quibble over how to interpret particular passages, but the message is clear. God and the Lamb will consummate their kingdom for their glory, and they will consummate their kingdom by saving their people and judging their enemies.

The Bible storyline has four sweeping parts: creation, fall, redemption, consummation, and Revelation is that consummation. Just compare the Bible's book-ends with Genesis to Revelation. In the beginning of Genesis, sin and death enter the world and then God banishes humans from His presence. End of Revelation, God destroys sin, banishes death, and He lives with people forever in the most holy place itself.

So the message of the New Testament and the whole Bible is this: God reigns, saves, and satisfies His people through covenant for His glory in Christ. God reigns as a sovereign King over everyone, and He has a special relationship with His people whom He saves and satisfies. And God does this through covenant, the new covenant, a better covenant that Christ mediates. God fulfills His ancient promises in Christ and He does it all for His glory because from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.