

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

LESSON 1/5

THE INTENTIONAL DESIGN OF GOD'S WORD



“For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to Him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased,’ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain.”

2 Peter 1: 16-18



HOOK

The more we learn about both the Old Testament and the New Testament, the more we will see them as inseparable components of one major story.



GOALS & STANDARDS

In this lesson we will:

- Connect the Old Testament and the New Testament
- Recognize how Jesus Christ fulfills God's promises throughout the Old Testament
- Cultivate a broad understanding of God's Word to identify the integrity and fullness of Scripture



ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

- Jesus fulfills the promises of God.
- The Old and New Testaments proclaim the same Triune God— existing eternally as Father, Son, and Spirit.
- God displays His love throughout the entirety of the Bible in a narrative that sweeps from Genesis to Revelation.



ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How are God's promises in the Old Testament fulfilled in the New Testament?
- How does our reading of the Old Testament inform our reading of the New Testament?
- How does our reading of the New Testament inform our reading of the Old Testament?

INTRODUCTION + PRAYER

Take a moment to pray, asking God to open your heart and mind as you learn...

While the Bible was originally written in three different languages, it exists as a single, integrated narrative; the New Testament is in the Old Testament *concealed*, and the Old Testament is in the New Testament *revealed*. The Old Testament contains more than three hundred prophecies detailing the coming Messiah, which the New Testament reveals were ultimately fulfilled in Christ. While the Old Testament contains unfulfilled ceremonies, unachieved reconciliation, unappeased longings, and unrealized prophecies, the New Testament shows us how Christ completes it all—revealing the Bible as one book, an intentionally designed and integrated whole that tells the story of God’s plan for our salvation.

Originally written primarily in Hebrew, the Old Testament was translated into Greek by 270 BC after Egypt’s King Ptolemy II funded seventy scholars to translate the text into Greek beginning around 285 BC. That means that the Old Testament was widely circulated three centuries before the Gospel accounts were even written!

It’s important to note that most of the Old Testament quotations in the New Testament are from Ptolemy’s translation, which is known as the Septuagint (which means “seventy”). You’ve likely noticed that there are several different translations of Bibles that are available to us today, and the Septuagint is largely responsible for that. Ultimately, because of its precise detail that was recorded centuries in advance, the Septuagint authenticates the reality that Jesus Christ really was who He says He was!

BRAINSTORM ACTIVITY

Gather your family or connect with a group of friends on FaceTime, Google Hangouts, Zoom, or another video chat platform, and consider the following scenario:

Imagine that you are reading a book that was written in the 1820s. In this book, the author describes current events and details surrounding the people in our lives today— events occurring 200 years after the book was written!

Discuss: What would you do with the information you were reading about in this book? Would you keep it to yourself or share the strangeness of it with the world?

Epik

The people who witnessed the life of Jesus didn't have to imagine this scenario— they lived it! As Jesus walked the earth, those who knew Him had access to The Old Testament, and they read it regularly. As they read God's promises and understood that one day a Savior would come to take away sin and repair the broken relationship between God and man, they did not realize that the very One Who they were reading about was already walking the earth!

Discuss: Considering your answer to the previous question, why do you think so many people didn't see Jesus for who He was?

INPUT



Watch: "What is the Bible?" (5:47)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ak06MSETeo4>



Read: 2 Peter 1:16-21

As Peter references in this passage of Scripture, we can trust every promise of God— from the Old Testament to the New Testament— because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ! In fact, Jesus confirms that all of the Bible points to Him in Luke 24:27 as He meets two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection: "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

The Old Testament is the record of the nation of Israel— God's chosen people who struggle to follow Him time and time again— anticipating the coming hope of the Messiah. This collection of books is also referred to as the Hebrew Bible, which is still used to describe the Jewish scriptures today.

The New Testament is the record of the Messiah who came to bring salvation to all the earth— it describes Jesus's life on earth, God as man. Throughout its twenty-seven books (which were all written after the death and resurrection of Jesus), the New Testament reveals how God restores His relationship with mankind, reconciling us to Him through His Son Jesus Christ.

The first five books of the New Testament are historical books, consisting of what we know as the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) and the book of Acts. Based on the historical context of the Gospels and the witness of other non-Christian writers of the time, we can be entirely sure that Jesus lived, breathed, and walked on earth.

Epik

In the Gospels, we see Jesus *in history* and *as history*. While the accounts of the Gospel writers are often parallel, each book is written from a different perspective (with distinctive emphases and genealogical assessments). Each Gospel highlights a particular aspect of Jesus's character: Matthew presents Jesus as the Anointed Son of David, Mark portrays Jesus as the Suffering Son of God, Luke displays Jesus as the Saving Lord, and John emphasizes that Jesus is the Word made flesh. Yet despite their varying themes, all four Gospels reveal one central truth: Jesus Christ is the Messiah who God promised would deliver the world from sin and death throughout the Old Testament!

After the four Gospels, the New Testament continues with the Acts of the Apostles (more commonly referred to as "Acts"). Acts was written as a sort of "part two" to the Gospel of Luke, and it details the early days of the Church— the body of Christ first formed in small communities and then from Samaria to Judea and ultimately to the ends of the earth!

Acts also details one of the most dramatic conversion stories ever recorded. Saul— who was known for his brutal persecution of Christians— was brought to his knees by the glory of Christ. After encountering Christ, Saul became the Apostle Paul; he went from being one of the Church's fiercest enemies to writing some of the Bible's most influential letters.

There are 21 letters in the New Testament (Paul wrote 13 of them). The purpose of each letter is unique, but generally, each one is intended to encourage deeper faith as the author makes connections between Christ and the words of the Old Testament. The letters also demonstrate the life-changing work that Christ makes accessible to every human being while also discussing the role of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives.

The New Testament concludes with the book of Revelation— a book written in a style unlike any other in the New Testament while still portraying the same good news as the Gospels. Revelation gives us hope in the fact that Jesus Christ will one day return to the earth to lead His people into the promised Kingdom of God— defeating sin and death forevermore!

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTION

Take a moment to reflect on the following question:

How does God's intentional design revealed in Scripture show you His ability and desire to design your life?

Epik

EXPERIENTIAL + PARTICIPATORY

Gather your family or connect with a group of friends on FaceTime, Google Hangouts, Zoom, or another video chat platform, and complete the following activity:

While the Old Testament was recorded and circulated well before the time of Christ, its books contain more than three hundred prophecies detailing the coming Messiah— all of which were documented over the course of hundreds of years.

Look through the Old Testament and find five Old Testament prophecies that are fulfilled in the New Testament (if you get stuck, read through the following article):

Article: “55 Old Testament Prophecies about Jesus | Jesus Film Project”

<https://www.jesusfilm.org/blog-and-stories/old-testament-prophecies.html>

HOMework

Gather your family or connect with a group of friends on FaceTime, Google Hangouts, Zoom, or another video chat platform, and discuss the following questions (or write out your own responses):

- What does today’s lesson show you about God’s timing?
 - How does the story of God’s interaction with humanity as detailed in the New Testament confirm that you can trust God today?
 - How does the life and ministry of Christ affect your life today nearly 2,000 years later?
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LESSON RESOURCES

- Video: “What is the Bible?” (5:47)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ak06MSETeo4>
- Article: “55 Old Testament Prophecies about Jesus| Jesus Film Project”
<https://www.jesusfilm.org/blog-and-stories/old-testament-prophecies.html>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES + CITATIONS

- Article: “What is the Septuagint? The Beginner’s Guide” | Ryan Nelson
<https://overviewbible.com/septuagint/>

LEARNING STYLES ENGAGED

- Verbal
- Visual
- Solitary
- Artistic
- Social

COGNITIVE LEARNING

- Application
- Analysis
- Evaluation
- Synthesis
- Knowledge
- Comprehension

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

LESSON 2/5

THE SCOPE AND SEQUENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT



“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but fulfill them.”

Matthew 5:17



HOOK

The New Testament is the story of how God becoming man changed the world forever.



GOALS & STANDARDS

In this lesson we will:

- Analyze the scope and sequence of the New Testament
- Outline the structure of the New Testament
- Summarize each book of the New Testament



ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

- The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the ultimate demonstration of God's grace, mercy, and love.
- Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life.
- The Holy Spirit dwells within the heart of every believer.



ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What is scope and sequence?
- How is the New Testament designed?
- What is the specific purpose of each individual book in the New Testament?

INTRODUCTION + PRAYER

Take a moment to pray, asking God to open your heart and mind as you learn...



Watch: “The New Testament Overview” (8:17)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoBrP8bqjoc>

When the Old Testament ends in the book of Malachi, we find that God’s people are in desperate need of purification. Malachi prophesied about a hundred years after the decree of Cyrus in 538 BC, which ended Israel’s Babylonian captivity and ultimately allowed God’s people to return to their land and rebuild the temple (as depicted in 2 Chronicles 36:23). Yet by the time Malachi was writing, the priests of Israel were caught up in corruption (Malachi 1:6-2:9), the people were intermarrying with idolaters (Malachi 2:10-12), they were not caring for those in need (Malachi 3:5), and they were failing to give proper tithes (Malachi 3:8-10). Simply— as demonstrated throughout the Old Testament— God’s people were failing to keep their promises to God!

Yet— as He promised Abraham long ago— God would never forget His promises to Israel! While God’s final word in the Old Testament is one of judgment and the human inability to love Him without the help of His grace, it also foreshadows the coming of the One who would purify God’s people— and the whole world— forevermore! For as Malachi writes in Malachi 4:5-6: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”

BRAINSTORM ACTIVITY

Use the link below to click through an image gallery of several different images that have been captured by the Hubble Space Telescope:

Image Gallery: “Hubble Space Telescope”

<https://www.spacetelescope.org/images/archive/top100/>

While each one of these images is beautiful, they mean little to nothing to us because we don’t know what we are really looking at!

Epik

Double click on the banner at the bottom of one of the images that displays the number of the image as well as the title of the image to reveal the “About the Image” and the “About the Object” information.

Yet when we learn more information about the image, broadly understanding what we are looking at by being able to categorize more material, we are able to better analyze the big picture.

Similarly, when we understand the scope and sequence of something, we are able to better categorize the material we learn as smaller components of a bigger picture.

Simply, scope and sequence outline the material found in teaching. While scope has to do with the depth and breadth of a certain topic, the sequence has to do with the intentional design and order of the teaching.

The New Testament is full of information. When we take a step back to look at the broad scope and sequence of the New Testament, we will be able to better categorize what each author is trying to communicate! For that reason, today we’ll look at the scope and sequence of the New Testament by briefly analyzing what material is found in each book and what the author of each book intended to teach.

INPUT

On the whole, the New Testament is the story of God becoming man to reconcile the hearts of man to God— just as Malachi said!

The Gospel of Matthew is an account of Jesus’s life and ministry. Throughout the book, Jesus teaches people what it means to be part of His kingdom— the “Kingdom of Heaven.” Matthew describes Jesus as the Anointed Son of David, identifying Him as the long-awaited Jewish Messiah.

The Gospel of Mark explains that the death of God’s Son is good news. Throughout the book, Mark—who writes in a fast-paced tone— tells the story of what Jesus did for us as “the suffering servant” prophesied in Isaiah 53. The author (John Mark) wrote this account of Jesus’s life based on the apostle Peter’s memories of Jesus’s words and deeds.

The Gospel of Luke was written by Luke (who was a physician) so “that [we] may have certainty concerning the things [we] have been taught [about Jesus]” (Luke 1:4). It is the story of Jesus’s ministry told exactly as it happened— ultimately communicating the place of Christians in God’s overall plan of Salvation History.

The Gospel of John is the story of Jesus as the Son of God and Word made flesh Who is equal to God in every way. Throughout the book, John refers to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” and he emphasizes the signs of Jesus— the One Who came to earth so that we may have eternal life. Ultimately, the book was written “so that [we] may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing [we] may have life in His name” (John 20:31).

The book of Acts (which was also written by Luke the physician) reveals the triumph of God’s saving purposes for the world. It tells the story of the formation of the Church and its development and growth in the first thirty years, ultimately emphasizing the work of The Holy Spirit and demonstrating that God’s purposes for the Church will not be hindered by persecution.

Paul’s Letter to the Romans outlines Paul’s doctrine and theology in a methodical manner. Simply, it is a description of the gospel, salvation, and Jesus’s work written to encourage and remind the Romans of the things they believed. Key themes include God’s judgment and mercy, righteousness, and faith (as revealed in Romans 1:16-17).

Paul’s Letters to the Corinthian Church were both written to help establish order in the church.

1 Corinthians teaches how the gospel is relevant to every dimension of church life, focusing on the unifying power of God’s grace and the truth of Christ crucified. The general theme of **2 Corinthians**— which is a highly emotional letter in which Paul tells the church that it should not look like the world— is suffering and the power of the Holy Spirit as demonstrated through Paul’s life and ministry (the letter proclaims that the gospel is demonstrated through human weakness).

Paul’s Letter to the Galatian Church distinguishes between the law and grace. It reveals that Christ’s death satisfied the Mosaic law, ultimately demonstrating that we are justified by faith— not our obedience to the law. The blessings of God have now been made accessible to all, both Jew and Gentile! In Christ, God’s promises to Abraham have been fulfilled.

Paul’s Letter to the Ephesian Church was written to encourage discouraged believers. In this letter, Paul writes that God has united all to Him through Christ, and we are reconciled to Him by grace through faith! Ultimately, our reconciliation to God should lead us to be reconciled to one another.

Paul’s Letter to the Philippian Church is another letter of encouragement that describes how we are

able to experience joy in suffering because of Christ. Because of what Christ has done for us, we are invited to participate in the same joyful self-giving that marked His life.

Paul's Letter to the Colossians reveals Jesus as Lord over all of creation— both invisible and visible. It warns against human wisdom and tradition, presenting Christ as preeminent over all things and sufficient for all people.

Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians focus on Christ's second coming. **1 Thessalonians** declares that Christians will be delivered from God's judgment and wrath during the coming Day of the Lord, and **2 Thessalonians** reveals how Christ will defeat the enemy while explaining how we are to rely on God's grace in the midst of suffering.

Paul's Pastoral Epistles begin with **1 Timothy**, which he wrote as practical instructions to the local church to promote godliness and how to spread the message of salvation, ultimately explaining how the gospel leads to a visible change in the lives of believers. In **2 Timothy**, Paul encourages perseverance in the midst of suffering, encouraging believers to pursue godliness and faith. **Titus** teaches that sound doctrine leads to godliness, ultimately linking faith and practice. Through accurate teaching, people will learn to live their lives in a way that is pleasing to God!

Paul writes the letter to Philemon as a model of true forgiveness. In the letter, Paul intercedes on behalf of a runaway slave named Onesimus. Ultimately, it teaches that fellowship comes from reconciliation, describing how slave-owner and slave should be reconciled to one another in light of their restored relationships with God.

The Letter to the Hebrews (author unknown) amplifies the "New Covenant," explaining how Jesus is greater than any character in Israel's history. In the midst of adversity, it challenges believers to fix their eyes on Jesus, live by faith, and run the race that is marked out for them.

The Letter of James teaches that faith is meant to be demonstrated. We should not only be hearers, but doers! James expresses a special concern for the poor and writes of how we should seek God's wisdom as we live our lives out of God's love.

The First Letter of Peter (1 Peter) teaches that believers should be full of hope in the midst of suffering, for when we suffer, we are following in the footsteps of Jesus— the Savior of the world! For that reason, we should persevere.

The Second Letter of Peter (2 Peter) was written to combat false teaching and to remind readers that God's grace is transforming— enabling sinners to walk in righteousness. It also discusses the end times.

The First Letter of John (1 John) teaches how the love of God works itself out in our lives. While Jesus is the central person of Christianity, love is the central action of Christianity.

The Second Letter of John (2 John) is primarily focused on truth— serving as a warning to true believers about false teachers. It teaches that we should love others in accordance with the truth of God's Word!

The Third Letter of John (3 John) is largely concerned with the issue of fellowship among those who proclaim the truth. John wants to ensure that believers offer a warm and hospitable welcome to those who travel around preaching the gospel.

The Letter of Jude teaches how the church must work to defend the faith, encouraging believers to persevere to the end and be diligent to resist the corruption and immorality that false teachers communicate.

The Revelation to John (Revelation) describes Jesus in His coming glory, revealing the ongoing battle the Church faces between good and evil and describing how one day we will live in a new heaven and a new earth in the presence of God. Everything that began in Genesis finds its end in the book of Revelation; it is the consummation of all things.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTION

Take a moment to reflect on the following question:

How does looking at this overview scope and sequence of the New Testament help you to better understand how God reveals Himself to you?

EXPERIENTIAL + PARTICIPATORY

Gather your family or connect with a group of friends on FaceTime, Google Hangouts, Zoom, or another video chat platform, and complete the following activity:

Now that you understand the overall scope and sequence of the New Testament, summarize each book of the New Testament using only one word (for example, the one-word summary for the Gospel

of Matthew might be “Messiah”).

HOMework

Gather your family or connect with a group of friends on FaceTime, Google Hangouts, Zoom, or another video chat platform, and discuss the following (or write out your own responses):

Imagine that you are writing a book about God:

- What would the title of the book be? Share your title and your thesis statement.
 - Name five character traits of God that you would want to emphasize.
 - What would you want your readers to take away from your book? In other words, how would they apply your teaching about God to their lives?
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LESSON RESOURCES

- Video: “The New Testament Overview” (8:17)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoBrP8bqj0c>
- Image Gallery: “Hubble Space Telescope”
<https://www.spacetelescope.org/images/archive/top100>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES + CITATIONS

- Article: “Study Notes on Malachi” | Gordon P. Hugenberg
ESV Study Bible (Crossway, 2008).

LEARNING STYLES ENGAGED

- Verbal
- Visual
- Solitary
- Artistic
- Social

COGNITIVE LEARNING

- Application
- Analysis
- Evaluation
- Synthesis
- Knowledge
- Comprehension

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE NEW COVENANT



“And likewise [He took] the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.’”

Luke 22:20



HOOK

This New Covenant does not just replace all the old covenants— it fulfills them!



GOALS & STANDARDS

In this lesson we will:

- Define covenant
- Understand God’s covenantal history with His people
- Recognize that Jesus fulfills all of God’s promises



ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

- God always keeps His promises.
- Jesus invites all people into an eternal covenantal relationship with God.
- The New Covenant is the culmination of God’s saving work in His people.



ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How do we know we can trust God?
- Why would God make covenants with the nation of Israel if He knew they would be unable to keep them?
- What is the New Covenant?

INTRODUCTION + PRAYER

Take a moment to pray, asking God to open your heart and mind as you learn...

The term “New Testament” simply means “New Covenant,” for the New Testament details how Christ fulfills every covenant!

The word “covenant” describes and outlines a binding relationship that requires faithfulness on the part of both parties (the word itself actually means “coming together”). Covenants contain defined obligations and commitments, but they differ from a contract in that they are relational and personal.

There are five major covenants in the Old Testament: God’s covenant with Noah in Genesis 8-9, God’s covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12 (which is further outlined in Genesis 15 & 17), God’s covenant with Israel through Moses in Exodus 19-24, God’s Covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7, and The New Covenant, which is described in Jeremiah 31 and ultimately fulfilled by Jesus! All these covenants serve the purpose of creating a new partnership and relationship into which God can eventually invite all humankind.

Just a few hours before Jesus was arrested and ultimately crucified, He celebrated the Passover feast with His disciples, using the common elements of bread and wine to prepare them for what was to come: “And He took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.’ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood’” (Luke 22:19-20). Jesus Himself ushered in the New Covenant so that we are able to live in a restored relationship with God!

BRAINSTORM ACTIVITY



Watch: “Hashtags: #FitnessFail” (2:33)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-_tpysRKhs

Discuss: We as humans fail all the time! While sometimes our failures are funny, the reality is that we are simply unable to achieve perfection.

Epik

Covenants imply a partnership between two different parties. As we see in Genesis 1 and 2, humans were created to be partners with God— taking care of the earth and living in perfect relationship with Him. But Genesis 3 reveals how we as humans decided that we wanted to do things our own way, and when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil even though He told them not to, our partnership with God was broken.

As we will see today in all of the major biblical covenants, God is the Covenant Maker (He is always the one Who invites us into relationship with Him), and our role as His human partners is clearly outlined. God makes the promises and then asks His people to make commitments. And even in spite of His people (us) failing to keep our commitments time and time again, today we will see how God never fails to keep His promises!

INPUT



Watch: “Covenants” (5:45)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ferLIsvlmI>

As the video mentions, there are four major covenants between God and His people in the Old Testament (five including the New Covenant). Let’s take a look at these covenants:

God’s Covenant with Noah

Genesis 8:20-9:17



Read: Genesis 9:7-17

The world is basically a disaster after Genesis 3, and God ultimately chooses to destroy the earth with a flood as detailed in Genesis 6. Yet God chooses Noah and His family to repopulate the earth, so after He instructs Noah to build a giant ark and he and his family ride out the flood, God promises to never again destroy the earth with a flood (creating the rainbow as a sign so that He would remember His promise to mankind). God also tells Noah that he must be fruitful and multiply as God originally commanded humanity to do back in Genesis 1 and 2. This covenant marks a new beginning for humanity and creation, and— as Genesis 9:16 says— this will be an “everlasting covenant” with people, animals, and the earth to bring reconciliation between God and creation (it’s important to note that the covenant with Noah provided the circumstances in which redemption could come, but wasn’t redemptive in and of itself).

Epik

God's Covenant with Abraham

Genesis 12, Genesis 15, Genesis 17



Read: Genesis 12:1-7

Genesis 12:3 serves as the backbone of God's renewed partnership with all of humanity: "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Notice how God starts this renewed partnership small (with one man/family), and the one through whom He chose to bless the whole earth did not even know Him (Joshua 24:2-3 tells us that Abram— who later became Abraham— was "serving other gods" when God called him).

God promises four specific things to Abraham through this covenant: heirs/family in verse 2 (carried out Genesis 12-50), land in verse 7 (carried out in Numbers-Deuteronomy), protection in verse 3, and everlasting covenant. As Genesis 15:3-6 and Genesis 17:1-20 will confirm, God promises to continually bless the earth through Abraham's family (Abraham's commitment was to follow God, and the sign of the covenant was circumcision).

God's Covenant with Israel through Moses

Exodus 19-24



Read: Exodus 19:1-8

What God starts with a single family in Abraham, He moves to a community— the nation of Israel. God has rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt and brings them to the foot of Mount Sinai, promising to make them His own treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy, set apart nation. Israel's role is to obey a set of laws that will help them live well as a community of God's partners, all of which are subsequently outlined in the next several chapters.

But Israel cannot uphold their part of the partnership. We see just a few chapters later (in Exodus 32) how they make an idol— which quite obviously breaks the first and second commandments of the Ten Commandments. God's people continually failing to uphold their end of the covenant by obeying God's commands is a constant theme of the Bible, but God never gives up on Israel because of what He promised to Abraham back in Genesis 12!

God's Covenant with David

2 Samuel 7



Read: 2 Samuel 7:8-16

The nation of Israel enters Canaan (the land promised to Abraham) and eventually demand a king. Saul from the tribe of Benjamin is anointed, but he fails to obey God, so he's rejected as king.

God then chooses David, the son of Jesse, from Israel's tribe of Judah to become king, ultimately promising him that one day one of his sons will come and extend the peace of God over all the nations! Again, God demands obedience and warns how He will punish disobedience, but His promise that one of David's descendants will reign forever will remain true even when the king and his people fail.

Yet again, Israel cannot uphold their part of the partnership outlined in the covenant. The Old Testament reveals that Israel continually worships other gods, and as a result of their disobedience, they lose their land and are captured by other nations. But as Hebrews 1:1 says, "God spoke to our fathers by the prophets," and the prophets speak about a day when God would restore these covenants even in spite of Israel's failure. That brings us to the final major covenant found in the Old Testament— The New Covenant in Jeremiah 31.

The New Covenant



Read: Jeremiah 31:31-34

The New Covenant is the culmination of God's saving work in His people. It is introduced by the prophets in the context of Israel's total failure to uphold their end of the partnership— the kings, the people, and even the religious leaders failed to keep God's commands over and over again. With the New Covenant, God promises to make an everlasting covenant with His people in which He will write His law on their hearts, bring complete forgiveness of sin, put His Spirit in them to empower them to love and obey His commands, raise up a faithful king from the Davidic line to rule over them, bring them back into the land to reunify them into one people of God, and cause them to be a light to the nations! The conditions of the New Covenant are brought about through the saving work of God's faithful Son, Jesus Christ!

All these covenants build on one another to form a sort of backbone to God's redemptive storyline. God preserved the world through Noah, initiated redemption through Abraham, formed a special people through Israel, promised a shepherd-king through David, and then fulfilled all of His covenantal promises through Jesus.

Jesus was a descendant of Abraham! He trusted and obeyed His Father— even to the point of death— and His death has blessed all nations (fulfilling the promise God gave Abraham and his family in Genesis 12). The law that was given to Moses and all of Israel in Exodus 19-22 outlined how God's people should live and maintain their relationship with Him, but Israel— God's people— couldn't keep the law. In His sinless life, Jesus kept the law perfectly in a way that we as humans never could— obeying it perfectly and suffering the penalty for our disobedience on the cross! Jesus Himself is the Messiah King from the line of David (there were 28 generations between them)! He is the royal

Son of David Who was promised in 2 Samuel 7 Who reigns eternal and sits at the right hand of God enthroned forever!

That is right! Jesus fulfills every covenant. Now we enjoy a covenantal relationship with God through our relationship with Jesus! Jesus invites all people to follow Him and engage in a new partnership with God. Even in spite of our own failures and disobedience, we are able to enjoy the full benefits of a covenantal relationship with God because Jesus was able to perfectly fulfill His commitment to God.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTION

Take a moment to reflect on the following question:

What does it mean to you that we as humans are always unable to act in perfect accordance to God's law? How does the New Covenant and the work of Jesus help you to know that God will always keep His promises to us even though we don't always keep our promises to Him?

EXPERIENTIAL + PARTICIPATORY

Jesus proves that God keeps His promises. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 1:20, "For all the promises of God find their Yes in [Jesus]..." We can trust God because He is the ultimate promise-keeper! The promises of God are truly endless, and we can trust in all of them because of His faithful character as proven throughout the Bible in these major covenants that are ultimately fulfilled in Jesus.

Gather your family or connect with a group of friends on FaceTime, Google Hangouts, Zoom, or another video chat platform, and complete the following activity:

Look up the following verses and list the promises of God that are associated with each one:

- Galatians 3:7-9
- Isaiah 41:10
- 1 John 1:9
- Romans 8:28
- Philippians 4:19

Epic

- Psalm 100:5
 - Psalm 34:17-18
 - Revelation 21:3-4
-

HOMework

Gather your family or connect with a group of friends on FaceTime, Google Hangouts, Zoom, or another video chat platform, and discuss the following questions (or write out your own responses):

- What do the covenants show us about God's character?
 - What do they show us about our character as humans?
 - What is a promise of God that you really need to believe right now, based on what is currently going on in your life? Create a lock screen of a Bible verse that will help you to remember that promise.
-

LESSON RESOURCES

- Video: “Hashtags: #FitnessFail” (2:33)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-tpysRKhs>
- Video: “Covenants” (5:45)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ferLIsvlml>

LEARNING STYLES ENGAGED

- Verbal
- Visual
- Solitary
- Artistic
- Social

COGNITIVE LEARNING

- Application
- Analysis
- Evaluation
- Synthesis
- Knowledge
- Comprehension

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

DEAR CHURCH: THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS AS RECORDED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES



“I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.”

1 Thessalonians 5:27



HOOK

Thirty-five percent of the New Testament is composed of letters that were written after the resurrection of Jesus!



GOALS & STANDARDS

In this lesson we will:

- Define epistle
- Understand the structure and importance of the letters found in the New Testament
- Recognize how these letters show us how to live life as followers of Jesus



ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

- The Bible is the inspired word of God.
- God used Spirit-filled individuals to write the Bible exactly as He planned.
- The epistles tell us how to live life as followers of Jesus in light of the resurrection!



ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How does the New Testament portray Jesus after the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John?
- How do the letters of the New Testament instruct us to live lives that reflect Jesus's life while He was here on earth?
- Why is it important to understand the structure and intent of the letters found in the New Testament?

INTRODUCTION + PRAYER

Take a moment to pray, asking God to open your heart and mind as you learn...

The Bible is composed of 66 books, written over 1500 years by about 40 different authors with varying backgrounds. It was composed in three different languages on three different continents, yet it is totally harmonious! Every number, every place, every name, and every detail is written down by deliberate design. We can entirely trust the Bible because it was written by God through people, clearly showing how to live a life that is honoring and glorifying to Him!

While the Bible contains several different literary genres— including narrative, poetry, prose, etc.— today we will discuss the overall structure and importance of the New Testament Epistles (which are letters that were written during the first century AD after Jesus’s death).

BRAINSTORM ACTIVITY

Consider: How does a letter differ in style, message, and intention from other forms of writing?

A letter is personal. It is written from one person to another person to communicate something that is of value. Letters typically imply a prior relationship between two people; they are usually not randomly written, and they typically follow a general structure.

While the entire Bible was written by God to the world, the New Testament contains twenty-one specific letters written with an intended purpose. Yet each one of these letters was meant to be shared with all believers, for as Paul writes in his first letter to the Church at Thessalonica, “I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers” (1 Thessalonians 5:27). Though the New Testament Epistles were originally addressed to specific people at a specific time, they are foundational to our understanding of God and how we are to live as His people!

INPUT



Watch: “Messiah” (5:47)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dEh25pduQ8>

The entire biblical narrative is centered upon the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ— the One Who came to rescue the world from evil and death! While the Old Testament contains promises and prophecies detailing the coming of the Messiah, the New Testament proclaims that Jesus is the Messiah who has come to take away the sin of the world!

As the video mentions, Jesus Christ is not only the saving Messiah who fulfills the prophecies of the Old Testament, but He also empowers His followers to live differently while we are here on earth. As we’ve established, the four Gospels and the book of Acts are historical books. While Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell of Jesus’s life and ministry during His time on earth, the book of Acts tells of the early days of the Church. The next book in the New Testament is the book of Romans, which is actually a letter that Paul wrote to the Roman church around 57 AD. Not only is it Paul’s longest letter, but it serves as the first of twenty-one letters— or epistles— contained in the New Testament. While Paul wrote thirteen of the New Testament Epistles, the apostle John wrote three, Peter wrote two, and James and Jude (the brothers of Jesus) each wrote one (the author of Hebrews is unknown). These twenty-one letters make up about 35% of the New Testament.

Letters were a popular method of communication during the time in which the New Testament was being written. Not only were they a useful way to communicate with those who lived far away, but they also served as a valuable tool to ensure that people could stay connected to one another despite large distances. For the writers of the New Testament letters specifically, letters communicated a sort of personal presence (in addition to continued opportunities for pastoral care and shepherding).

Though there are exceptions, each New Testament letter typically has three distinct parts: a greeting (which often contains the name of the sender and the identification of the recipients as well as general well-wishes and blessings to whomever the author is addressing), the body of the letter (which contains content addressing the varying purposes and themes of each letter), and a conclusion (which was oftentimes similar to the greeting in nature and typically also included further instructions and a kind of benediction or doxology).

Ultimately, the New Testament Epistles offer us a different perspective than the historical books in the New Testament as they were written after the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. As we learned in the video, because Jesus conquered death, His life and power can become our life and power as we live our lives here on earth! The New Testament Epistles demonstrate how to live holy

Epik

and God-honoring lives so that we might look more and more like Jesus did during His time on earth. For as Paul writes in His letter to the Church at Ephesus: “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:1-2).

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTION

Take a moment to reflect on the following question:

How do the New Testament Epistles show us what it looks like to be “imitators of God” as Ephesians 5:1 tells us to be?

EXPERIENTIAL + PARTICIPATORY

Gather your family or connect with a group of friends on FaceTime, Google Hangouts, Zoom, or another video chat platform, and complete the following activity:

Take a look at one of the shorter New Testament Epistles (Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, James, 1 & 2 Peter, or 1-3 John would be great for this assignment).

Briefly read through your letter as a group, and answer the following questions:

- Can you identify the greeting and the closing of the letter? If so, copy down the verses and content. Identify the sender and recipient if possible.
 - What are some of the major themes that are present throughout the letter?
 - Why do you think the letter was written?
 - How might this letter encourage you and direct you today?
-

HOMework

Draft a letter to a friend that describes what it looks like to follow Jesus. Be sure your letter follows the same general structure of a New Testament Epistle, including containing a greeting, body, and conclusion.

LESSON RESOURCES

- Video: “Messiah” (5:47)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dEh25pduQ8>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES + CITATIONS

- Article: “Reading the Epistles” in the ESV Study Bible | Thomas Schreiner (Crossway, 2008)
- Book: *Introduction to the New Testament* by D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Andrew David Naselli (Zondervan, 2010)

LEARNING STYLES ENGAGED

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- Visual
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- Artistic
- Social

COGNITIVE LEARNING

- Application
- Analysis
- Evaluation
- Synthesis
- Knowledge
- Comprehension

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

DIVINE LOVE

LESSON 5/5



“In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him.”

1 John 4:9



HOOK

Jesus not only taught true love— He also demonstrated true love!



GOALS & STANDARDS

In this lesson we will:

- Consider how Jesus embodied love on earth
- Understand how our lives are influenced by God’s love for us
- Recognize what it looks like to live out our faith through love



ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

- God is love.
- God sent Jesus to earth to demonstrate His love for us.
- Because God first loved us, we are able to show love to others.



ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How does God demonstrate love throughout the Bible?
- How did Jesus both demonstrate and teach love?
- What does it mean to really love someone?

INTRODUCTION + PRAYER

Take a moment to pray, asking God to open your heart and mind as you learn...

John 3:16 sums up the gospel: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” While the entire Bible tells of God’s love for His people, the culmination of God’s love for us is demonstrated in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ!

More than twenty percent of the New Testament references to love are found in the letters of 1, 2, and 3 John (which in total only consist of 7/260 chapters of the entire New Testament!).

According to John (who often refers to himself as “the [disciple] whom Jesus loved”) love is not simply a trait of Christian living— it is the *driving force* of Christian living. For as he writes in 1 John 4:8, “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” Not only does the New Testament give practical application describing how we should practice our faith, but it constantly reminds us of how God has first loved us!

BRAINSTORM ACTIVITY

Gather your family or connect with a group of friends on FaceTime, Google Hangouts, Zoom, or another video chat platform, and think of several different ways to describe God’s love using various metaphors to fill in the blanks of the following statement:

“God’s love is like _____ because it is _____”

(**Example:** God’s love is like a river after a rainstorm because it is overflowing!)

While God’s love is displayed throughout the entirety of Scripture, His love is so vast and overwhelming that it is indescribable! We as humans have to use metaphors to describe God’s love because we cannot possibly grasp its magnitude!

INPUT



Watch: “Word Study: Agape- Love” (4:48)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slyevQ1LW7A&feature=youtu.be>



Read: 1 John 4:7-21

The teachings and life of Jesus redefined love for the rest of eternity. Because Jesus was God embodied, He is the greatest demonstration of God’s love! For as John writes in 1 John 4:9: “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him.”



Read: Matthew 22:36-40

Consider: How is loving God and loving our neighbors related?

Throughout the New Testament, we not only see how Jesus taught and demonstrated love, but also how we are to love out of His love for us. As the video explained, our love for God will be expressed by our love for people— loving God and loving people are inseparable!

While the Gospels reveal Jesus’s teachings about love as well as how He demonstrated love, many of the New Testament Epistles expand on God’s love for us while also showing us how we are to practically walk in love as a response to His love for us.



Read: Romans 5:8

Consider: How does Jesus’s death show us God’s love?



Read: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Consider:

- What do these verses say about how God values love?
- What do these verses say about the nature of love?



Read: Ephesians 4:1-6

Consider:

- What does it look like to bear with another person in love?
- How does the Spirit equip us to love?



Read: Colossians 3:12-14

Consider: How does love bind everything together in perfect harmony?

Ultimately, we love out of a response to the New Covenant that God has given us in Jesus Christ! He Himself defines love! For as John writes in 1 John 3:16-18: “By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTION

Take a moment to reflect on the following question:

How can you demonstrate God’s love for you by loving others?

EXPERIENTIAL + PARTICIPATORY

Gather your family or connect with a group of friends on FaceTime, Google Hangouts, Zoom, or another video chat platform, and complete the following activity:

Read Jesus’s words describing love in John 15:9-17. Make a 60-90 second video summarizing the concept of love as revealed in the New Testament. At a minimum, be sure your video includes:

- Broad definitions of unconditional love and conditional love
 - An example contrasting how the world defines love and how the Bible defines love
 - A Bible verse or passage of Scripture describing God’s love for us
 - A Bible verse or passage of Scripture that shows us how to love
-

HOMEWORK

Gather your family or connect with a group of friends on FaceTime, Google Hangouts, Zoom, or another video chat platform, and discuss the following (or write out your own responses):

- How do you know that God loves you?
- How does obeying God’s commands demonstrate our love for Him?
- Name two practical ways that you can imitate Christ and love others.

LESSON RESOURCES

- Video: “Word Study: Agape- Love” (4:48)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slyevQ1LW7A&feature=youtu.be>

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