

New Testament

Resources

[New Testament Survey, 2nd Edition \(Geoff Sunstrom, 1994\)](#)

The New Testament is the second major division of the Bible, written in the decades following the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It bears authoritative witness to the fulfilment of God's promises in the Old Testament, centred upon the person and work of Jesus, the Messiah ([Luke 24:44–47](#) and [Hebrews 1:1–3](#)). It records His incarnation, ministry, sacrificial death, resurrection, and ascension, as well as the formation and growth of the early church empowered by the Holy Spirit.

At its heart, the New Testament proclaims the good news ([εὐαγγέλιον](#) plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigεὐαγγέλιον

Means “good news” or “gospel”) that “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” ([John 3:16](#) plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigJohn 3:16

Greek οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ’ ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον. ESV For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. NIV “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life....). It calls all people to repentance and faith, offering the sure hope of forgiveness of sins and eternal life through Jesus Christ ([Acts 2:38](#) plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigActs 2:38

Greek Πέτρος δὲ πρὸς αὐτοὺς, μετανοήσατε, φησὶν, καὶ βαπτισθήτω ἕκαστος ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν, καὶ λήμψεσθε τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος· ESV And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. NIV Peter replied,... and [Romans 10:9](#) plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigRomans 10:9

Greek ὅτι ἐὰν ὁμολογήσῃς ἐν τῷ στόματί σου κύριον Ἰησοῦν, καὶ πιστεύσῃς ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου ὅτι ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ἤγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν, σωθήσῃ· ESV because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. NIV That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,-[10](#) plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigRomans 10:10

Greek καρδίᾳ γὰρ πιστεύεται εἰς δικαιοσύνην, στόματι δὲ ὁμολογεῖται εἰς σωτηρίαν. ESV For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. NIV For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.).

Books of the New Testament

The New Testament is composed of 27 books, traditionally grouped into four categories:

- The Gospels

- The Acts of the Apostles
- The Epistles (letters)
- The Book of Revelation

The Gospels

The Gospels are the narratives that recount the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The term gospel means “good news” and refers to the announcement of God’s saving reign in Christ. There are 4 narratives:

- **Matthew** – Written primarily for a Jewish audience, emphasising Jesus as the promised Messiah and fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy ([Matthew 1:22](#) plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigMatthew 1:22)

Greek τοῦτο δὲ ὅλον γέγονεν ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος, ESV All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: NIV All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: NLT All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet:–[23](#) plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigMatthew 1:23

Greek ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν, καὶ καλέσουσιν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ, ὃ ἔστιν μεθερμηνευόμενον μεθ’ ἡμῶν ὁ θεός. ESV “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). NIV “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel... and [5:17](#) plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigMatthew 5:7

Greek μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται. ESV “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. NIV Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. NLT God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy. KJV Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.)

- **Mark** – The shortest and earliest Gospel, marked by urgency and action, portraying Jesus as the Son of God who came “to give his life as a ransom for many” ([Mark 10:45](#) plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigMark 10:45)

Greek καὶ γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἦλθεν διακονηθῆναι ἀλλὰ διακονῆσαι καὶ δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν. ESV For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” NIV For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.).

- **Luke** – A carefully ordered account addressed to Theophilus, highlighting Jesus’ compassion for the poor and outcast ([Luke 4:18](#) plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigLuke 4:18)

Greek πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ’ ἐμέ, οὗ εἵνεκεν ἔχρισέν με εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς, ἀπέσταλκέν με ESV “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,–[19](#) plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigLuke 4:19

Greek κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεσιν καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν, ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει, κηρύξαι ἐνιαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτόν. ESV to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” NIV to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” NLT and that the time of the Lord's favor has come. “ KJV To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.)

- [John](#) – Distinct from the other three (which are together known as the synoptic) gospels, focusing on the divine identity of Jesus and His mission so that readers “may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God” ([John 20:31](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigJohn 20:31)

Greek ταῦτα δὲ γέγραπται ἵνα πιστεύητε ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ἵνα πιστεύοντες ζωὴν ἔχητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ. ESV but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. NIV But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name....)

The Acts of the Apostles

Written by Luke as a sequel to his Gospel ([Acts 1:1](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigActs 1:1)

Greek Τὸν μὲν πρῶτον λόγον ἐποιήσαμην περὶ πάντων, ὧ Θεόφιλε, ὧν ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς ποιεῖν τε καὶ διδάσκειν ESV In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, NIV In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach NLT In my first book I told you, Theophilus, about everything Jesus began to do and teach-2plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigActs 1:2

Greek ἄχρι ἧς ἡμέρας ἐντειλάμενος τοῖς ἀποστόλοις διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου οὓς ἐξελέξατο ἀνελήμφθῃ· ESV until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. NIV until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.), Acts traces the story of the early followers of Christ as the gospel spread from Jerusalem towards Rome, fulfilling Christ's Great Commission in [Acts 1:8](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigActs 1:8

Greek ἀλλὰ λήψεσθε δύναμιν ἐπελθόντος τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐφ' ὑμᾶς, καὶ ἔσεσθέ μου μάρτυρες ἐν τε Ἱερουσαλὴμ καὶ ἐν πάσῃ τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ καὶ Σαμαρίᾳ καὶ ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς. ESV But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.“ NIV But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to... and [Matthew 28:19](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigMatthew 28:19

Greek πορευθέντες μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, ESV Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, NIV Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,.... It can be viewed in three main movements:

- Jerusalem (Acts 1–7) – The witness to the Jews, focusing on Peter's ministry
- Judea and Samaria (Acts 8–12) – The gospel beginning crossing ethnic boundaries
- The ends of the earth (Acts 13–28) – Paul's missionary journeys to the Gentiles and witness before rulers

While often called the “Acts of the Apostles,” it could equally be titled the “Acts of the Holy Spirit,” as it highlights the Spirit's role in empowering the church.

The Epistles

Epistles are letters written to individuals, churches, or groups of believers, providing instruction, encouragement, and correction. They are divided into:

- Pauline Epistles – Written by the Apostle Paul to specific churches and include [Romans](#), [1 Corinthians](#), [2 Corinthians](#), [Galatians](#), [Ephesians](#), [Colossians](#), [1 Thessalonians](#), [2 Thessalonians](#), [1 Timothy](#), [2 Timothy](#), [Titus](#) and [Philemon](#)
- General Epistles – Written by other apostles or leaders and include [Hebrews](#), [James](#), [1 Peter](#), [2 Peter](#), [1 John](#), [2 John](#), [3 John](#), and [Jude](#)

The letters address theological truths (justification, sanctification, the return of Christ) and practical Christian living (unity, moral conduct, perseverance).

The Book of Revelation

Revelation is an apocalyptic prophecy given to the Apostle John while exiled on the island of Patmos ([Revelation 1:9](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigRevelation 1:9)

Greek Ἐγὼ Ἰωάννης, ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὑμῶν καὶ συνκοινωνὸς ἐν τῇ θλίψει καὶ βασιλείᾳ καὶ ὑπομονῇ ἐν Ἰησοῦ, ἐγενόμην ἐν τῇ νήσῳ τῇ καλουμένῃ Πάτμῳ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ. ESV I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus....). It reveals the ultimate victory of God over evil with symbolic visions that portray the final judgment, the return of Christ, and the creation of a new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21-22).

While Christians differ on the interpretation of some details (e.g., the Millennium of Revelation 20), the central message is clear: God's kingdom will triumph, and His people will dwell with Him forever free from suffering.

The Jewish World During the Time of the New Testament

When the Old Testament narrative closed around 400 BC, the Jewish people were living under Persian rule, having returned from exile in Babylon and rebuilt both the Temple and the walls of Jerusalem. The next four centuries are often called the Inter-Testamental Period and during this time the Jewish world experienced significant political, cultural, and religious change.

In 333 BC, the conquests of Alexander the Great brought much of the known world under Greek control. This spread Greek language and culture (Hellenism) far beyond its homeland, and Koine Greek became the common tongue for trade, governance, and scholarship. This cultural shift also influenced Jewish religious life, and it was during this time that the Old Testament was translated into Greek, the text being known as the Septuagint or LXX. This was read widely, including by New Testament writers.

By the first century BC, the Roman Empire had risen to dominance, and in 63 BC the Roman general Pompey captured Jerusalem. Roman rule brought an extensive network of roads, increased trade, and political stability, but also heavy taxation and a foreign military presence. At the time of Jesus' birth

(likely between 6 and 4 BC), Herod the Great reigned as a client king under Rome, exercising considerable authority in Judea while maintaining loyalty to his imperial overlords.

Jewish society in this period was religiously vibrant yet socially divided. The population of Jews included those born in the land of Israel, commonly referred to as Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, as well as Jews living throughout the Roman Empire, known as the Diaspora. Hebraic Jews were those who retained the Hebrew and Aramaic languages and traditional customs. Hellenist Jews were those who adopted the Greek language and many aspects of Greek culture .

From a Jewish perspective, humanity was divided into Jews and Gentiles. Gentiles who were sympathetic to Jewish faith in Yahweh and worshipped him without full conversion to Judaism were called God-fearers. A small number of God-fearers became full converts, known as proselytes. Most Gentiles, however, remained pagan, continuing to follow the religions of their own nations, worshipping multiple gods.

This was the complex cultural and political world into which Jesus was born, ministered, and sent out His apostles. Understanding this background helps explain many tensions and encounters recorded in the New Testament.

New Testament Geography

The events described in the New Testament span a wide and varied geographical area, from the rural hills of Galilee to the centre of Jewish worship in Jerusalem to the imperial city of Rome. Israel, the homeland of the Jewish people, wasn't called Israel at the time of Jesus but was divided into distinct regions:

- Galilee in the north, known for its fertile land and mixed Jewish-Gentile population
- Samaria in the central hill country, inhabited by the Samaritans, a people with a complex history and tense relationship with the Jews ([John 4:9](#))

Greek λέγει αὐτῷ ἡ γυνὴ ἡ Σαμαρίτις· πῶς σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ὢν παρ' ἐμοῦ πεῖν αἰτεῖς γυναῖκος Σαμαρίτιδος οὔσης; ESV The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) NIV The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?)

- Judea in the south, where Jerusalem and the temple stood as the religious heart of Jewish life

The geography of these regions deeply shaped New Testament history. The road networks built by Rome enabled rapid travel, which later allowed the apostles to carry the gospel far beyond their homeland. Coastal cities such as Caesarea Maritima connected the region to the wider Mediterranean world, while inland routes through Syria and Asia Minor became the highways of Paul's missionary journeys.

As the message of Christ spread, it moved beyond the land of Israel to major urban centres across the eastern Mediterranean including Antioch, Philippi, Corinth, and Ephesus, before eventually reaching Rome itself, the political and cultural hub of the empire. These geographical realities were not incidental and were part of God's providential preparation for the rapid spread of the gospel "to the ends of the earth" ([Acts 1:8](#)).

Major Theological Themes

Several central theological themes run throughout the New Testament:

- The Kingdom of God – Announced by Jesus as both “already” present ([Luke 17:21](#)|[Luke 17:21](#)) and “not yet” fully realised ([Matthew 25:31–34](#)).
- The Person and Work of Christ – Fully God and fully man ([John 1:1](#)[John 1:1](#))

Greek Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. ESV In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. NIV In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. NLT In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God., [14](#)

Greek καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας. ESV And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. NIV The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth....), the promised Messiah who redeems through His death and resurrection ([1 Corinthians 15:3](#)[1 Corinthians 15:3](#))

Greek παρέδωκα γὰρ ὑμῖν ἐν πρώτοις, ὃ καὶ παρέλαβον, ὅτι Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν κατὰ τὰς γραφάς, ESV For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, NIV For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,...-[4](#)

Greek καὶ ὅτι ἐτάφη, καὶ ὅτι ἐγήγερται τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ κατὰ τὰς γραφάς, ESV that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, NIV that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, NLT He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said.).

- Salvation by Grace through Faith – A gift of God, not earned by works ([Ephesians 2:8](#)[Ephesians 2:8](#))

Text Greek τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι διὰ πίστεως· καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν, θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον· ESV For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, NIV For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-[9](#)

Text Greek οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, ἵνα μή τις καυχῆσθαι. ESV not a result of works, so that no one may boast. NIV not by works, so that no one can boast. NLT Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. KJV)

- The Role of the Holy Spirit – Empowering believers for witness and holy living ([Acts 1:8](#)[Acts 1:8](#))

Greek ἀλλὰ λήμψεσθε δύναμιν ἐπελθόντος τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς, καὶ ἔσεσθέ μου μάρτυρες ἐν τε Ἱερουσαλὴμ καὶ ἐν πάσῃ τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ καὶ Σαμαρίᾳ καὶ ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς. ESV But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my

witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” NIV But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to... and [Galatians 5:16-26](#))

- The Mission of the Church – To make disciples of all nations ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)).
- Hope of Christ’s Return – The hope that Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead and renew creation ([Titus 2:13](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigTitus 2:13)

Greek προσδεχόμενοι τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα καὶ ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ESV waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, NIV while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, and [Revelation 21:1-5](#)).

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