

## WHAT IS THE NEW TESTAMENT?

The New Testament is a collection of 27 writings from the first century AD, produced by the earliest followers of Jesus, consisting of:

- **The Gospels**

- Matthew
- Mark
- Luke
- John

- **History**

- Acts

- **Paul's Letters**

- Romans
- 1 Corinthians
- 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 Thessalonians
- 2 Thessalonians
- 1 Timothy
- 2 Timothy
- Titus
- Philemon

- **Other Apostolic Letters**

- Hebrews
- James
- 1 Peter
- 2 Peter
- 1 John
- 2 John
- 3 John
- Jude

- **Apocalyptic**

- Revelation

- **The Gospels** are first-century writings that preserve early Christian memories of Jesus—his life, teachings, death, and resurrection—told as carefully shaped stories for real communities. They are not word-for-word transcripts, but historically grounded accounts meant to explain who Jesus is and why he matters as the clearest revelation of God's heart.

- **The book of Acts** continues the Gospel story by tracing what happened after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, focusing on the spread of the early Jesus movement through the work of the apostles. It is a historically rooted narrative that shows how the message about Jesus took shape in real communities as God's purposes moved from Israel outward to the nations.

- **Paul's letters** are real first-century communications written to early Christian communities, addressing their questions, struggles, and disagreements as they learned how to follow Jesus. They combine practical guidance with deep reflection on what Jesus' life, death, and resurrection mean for faith, community life, and God's unfolding purposes.

- The other **Apostolic letters** are writings connected to the earliest apostles, sent to guide and strengthen Christian communities facing pressure, confusion, and moral challenges. They offer encouragement, correction, and instruction for faithful living, grounding everyday conduct in loyalty to Jesus and trust in God.

- **The book of Revelation** is an apocalyptic work that uses vivid symbols and visions to reveal what is really happening behind the scenes of history and where God's purposes are headed. The word apocalyptic means "unveiling" or "revealing," and Revelation uses dramatic imagery to uncover spiritual realities and assure believers that God will ultimately set things right.

## HOW THE NEW TESTAMENT CAME TO US

- The books of the New Testament were written within living memory of Jesus (roughly AD 40–70) and grew out of early oral teaching, as his words and stories were first shared, repeated, and shaped for different communities before being written down.
- That these 27 books of the New Testament are considered “canon” is a tradition that developed over the first 300 years of church history, as early Christians gradually recognized which writings carried apostolic authority, had an early origin, and were in widespread use.
- Other early Christian writings, such as The Didache and 1 Clement, were widely read and help us understand how the Christian faith was lived out in the years immediately following the Apostles’ ministry. Furthermore, the Jewish historian Josephus also documented the Roman–Jewish War and the destruction of Jerusalem—events the New Testament anticipates but does not record—providing essential historical context for Jesus’ words and the Apostles’ writings.

## WHY DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT MATTER?

### • The Story of the Bible

The New Testament continues and completes the story that began in Genesis by showing how God’s promises to Israel reach their fulfillment in Jesus. The Old Testament tells the long story of God calling a people, forming a covenant, and working through Israel to bring blessing to the world, but it also leaves the story unresolved, marked by failure, exile, and hope for restoration. The New Testament presents Jesus as the climax of that story—the faithful Israelite, Messiah, and Son—through whom God finally deals with sin, reveals His true character, and launches a renewed people not defined by ethnicity or law, but by trust, allegiance, and new life. In this way, the New Testament does not replace Israel’s story but brings it to its intended goal, opening God’s promises to all nations and pointing toward the renewal of all things.

### • Inspired by God?

The New Testament is inspired by God, not because it bypasses human thought, but because God chose to speak through real people in real situations. Its authors wrote with their own personalities, styles, questions, and purposes—addressing specific communities, problems, and moments in history—yet God worked through those human voices to communicate what He wanted His people to know. Inspiration, then, is not mechanical dictation, but a partnership in which God’s Spirit shaped, guided, and continues to use these writings to reveal truth, form faith, and draw people to Himself through Jesus.

### • Jesus is the Final Revelation of God

The New Testament presents Jesus as the final and truest revelation of God because, as **Hebrews 1:1–3 (NLT)** explains, while God once spoke **“many times and in many ways through the prophets,”** He has now spoken decisively through His Son—the one who **“expresses the very character of God.”** In Jesus, God is no longer known mainly through laws, rituals, or partial glimpses, but through him—whose life, teaching, death, and resurrection show us exactly what God is like. This is why Paul can say in **Romans 10:4 (CJB)** that **“the goal at which the Torah aims is the Messiah,”** meaning that everything Israel’s Scriptures were pointing toward finds its fulfillment and purpose in Jesus. As a result, the New Testament becomes our primary guide for understanding how we relate to God, one another, and our purpose in life—calling us into a way of living shaped by trust, faithfulness, and love as revealed in Jesus.