

Week 3

The Bible: New Testament Survey

Key Verse

Hebrews 1:1-2 - God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He also made the world.

+ Introduction

Last week we found out that there is a very close connection between the Old and New Testament. There is a threaded message that is unified throughout the centuries. As we begin our survey of the New Testament, let's take a few minutes first to understand the Bible's chronological storyline. This will give us the framework for understanding every scriptural narrative and passage.

Author Iva May has put together a 14 Era timeline that helps us wrap our minds around the Big Story, so that we can remember it and then tell it to others. In 2019 our church began going through the Tyndale One-Year Chronological Bible and the materials written by Iva May and the Chronological Bible Teaching team.

In every Era, we see that God speaks, God acts, and God reveals Himself and His will. Thinking of these specific actions as threads in the tapestry will help you link together the single story of how the human race got into this predicament and how God came to redeem us through Jesus Christ.

At the end of this lesson is a printout of a bookmark we created to help us remember and understand the Eras. Below is the list in order. Note that the first 10 Eras are covered in the Old Testament, the last 4 in the New Testament. *Please let your class know that more details can be found on the chronologicalbibleteaching.com website.*

1. Creation Era
2. Patriarch Era
3. Exodus and Law Era

4. Conquest Era
5. Judges or Sin-Cycle Era
6. Kingdom Era
7. Divided Kingdom Era
8. Captivity Era
9. Return Era
10. Silent Era
11. Gospel Era
12. Church Era
13. Missions Era
14. End Times/New Beginnings Era

✦ Setting the Stage ¹

A. Cultural/Political Background of the New Testament

The time between the Old Testament recordings and the New Testament spans 400 years (the Silent Era). The last ruler mentioned by name in the Old Testament is Darius the Persian (Nehemiah 12:22). When we arrive at the New Testament, the ruling monarch is Augustus, who represents Rome's power. Between these two periods of time, Palestine transitioned from the Babylonian period through the Persian period (539-331B.C.), the Grecian period (331-320 B.C.), the Ptolemaic period (320-198 B.C.), the Syrian period (198-167 B.C.), the Maccabean period (167-142 B.C.), the Hasmonean period (142-63 B.C.), and finally to the Roman period (63 B.C.).

As you can see, the Palestinian people were not accustomed to ruling themselves. Their history had seen them as a subservient society to various dynasties in power through the years. However, the Roman Empire offered a different approach to government that set the stage for the New Testament writings.

To administer this vast empire, Augustus implemented two styles of government depending on the perceived unrest of a region. For the more peaceful and settled areas, a proconsul was appointed by the Roman Senate. However, in areas that presented more of a challenge, like Palestine, Augustus retained direct control and appointed a proprietor or prefect, who retained his office at the emperor's discretion. Pontius Pilate served as prefect of Judea from A.D. 26-36, encompassing the ministry of Jesus Christ. Several emperors followed during the writing of the New Testament (basically the first century) including Tiberius (A.D. 14-37), Caligula (A.D. 37-41), Claudius (A.D. 41-54), Nero (A.D. 54-68), Vespian (A.D. 69-79), Titus (A.D. 79-81), and Domitian (A.D. 81-96).

The Roman Empire used local rulers to implement policy and control, at times giving a false sense of self-government in local regions. But the region during New Testament times was under Rome's control and had the political dynamics of the Roman Empire.

It was in this environment that the New Testament takes place. The people, places, stories, and teachings all happen in the Roman Empire. Though various earthly emperors held office, God was supreme and sovereign just as He is today.

B. Life in Palestine

Palestine's population has been estimated at between 500,000 and 600,000, while Jerusalem was home to about 25,000 of these people. The city of Jerusalem grew to several times this population during Jewish festivals. Most people lived in either tents or homes made of stone and plaster.

Jewish people had two main social classes, the chief priest and temple officials being the upper class and everyone else being the lower class. Jews in Judea looked with disdain upon the residents of Galilee because of the mixing of races. Slavery, while common in the Roman Empire, was less prevalent in the Jewish culture and did not involve inhumane treatment.

Three languages were most common in Palestine: Hebrew, the language of the synagogue, Greek, the language of business and government, and Latin, an international language. Aramaic was a dialect of Hebrew.

The synagogues assumed the responsibility of educating the young men, starting at about age 6. Industry consisted of agriculture, fishing, and trading mainly. There was no public transportation and most people did not venture far from home. Therefore when Jesus and His disciples traveled, it was something special that someone came to that particular region or village.

+ The New Testament Writings ²

The New Testament consists of 27 books known as the New Testament Canon. Derived from the Greek word Kanon, the concept originally inferred a straight rod or measuring stick used as a measurement of length.

A. The Four Gospels

Four broad literary types appear in the New Testament: Biography in the Gospels, Letters in the Epistles, history in Acts, and prophetic in Revelation. Almost all of what we know about Jesus is obtained from descriptions of His life in the gospels.

Clearly, the gospels do not present every detail of the life of Christ. These books were written with the purpose of communicating the details of the most important man who ever lived, a person upon whom our faith can be established. This is the gospels' central message that Christ came to redeem a lost people, specifically you and me. This does not change the historicity of the facts included within them, but provides the context for the gospels' central message.

The four gospels do not profess to be comprehensive historical accounts of the life of Jesus because they lack details about His childhood and growth into maturity. Although they do not provide complete details of the ministry years, they do generally focus on this aspect of His life. The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) focus on Christ's Galilean ministry while John

focuses more on His Judean ministry. Each author provides a different perspective and different emphasis. It has been said the four gospels provide a "picture" of Jesus. A picture is typically framed. Think of the four gospels as the four sides of a frame, putting them together gives a clearer picture.

B. The Book of Acts

The Book of Acts is an account of history, covering the early years of the development of the church, approximately 35 years. Some refer to it as simply "Acts", others "The Acts of the Apostles." However, the title is a bit misleading because the book contains only a few of the "acts" of some of the apostles, primarily Peter and Paul. The book is more a story of the extension of the church from Jerusalem to Rome than it is a complete history of the apostles' acts. Whereas Jesus is the chief character in the gospels, the Holy Spirit working through the apostles is in Acts.³ Hence, it should be called "The Acts of the Holy Spirit."

The book of Acts, being primarily a historical document, should not be used primarily as a theological foundation. While Luke provides theological insights into the historical account, it comes as additional perspective on the events as opposed to a theological description. It is important to match these historical accounts with the other theological documents, as in the epistles, for a balanced foundational study.

The chart below⁴ is a helpful resource explaining the waves of expansion and the people involved:

People	Peter	Peter & John	Stephen	Philip – Barnabas – Peter – Saul/Paul	Paul along with Barnabas, Silas, Timothy & others	Paul					
	1st wave of expansion			2nd wave	3rd wave of expansion						
Dates	2 Years (AD 30-32)			14 Years (AD 32-47)	10 Years (AD 47-57)	4 Years (AD 57-62)					
Section	Spirit-filled birth of the Church	Spirit-filled community of the early Church	Spirit-anointed testing of the Church	Persecution of the Church	Expansion of the Church to the Gentiles	Paul - 1st Missionary Journey	Paul - 2nd Missionary Journey	Paul - 3rd Missionary Journey	Paul in Jerusalem - arrest	Paul in Caesarea - trials	Paul journeys to Rome
	1:1	2:47	3:1 6:7 6:8 8:1	8:1b 9:43 10:1 12:25	13:1 15:35 15:36 18:22 18:23 21:14	21:15 23:10 23:11 26:32 27:1 28:31					
Date	circa 65 A.D.										
Author	Luke the Doctor										

The book of Acts also gives a pathway of the ministry and Epistles of Paul as per the chart below⁵:

PAUL'S LETTERS AND MISSIONARY JOURNEYS				
YEAR A.D.	MAJOR EVENTS	ACTS	PERIOD	LETTERS
34	Conversion, Damascus, Arabia	9	3 years - Arabia	
37	Jerusalem, Tarsus, Syria, Cilicia			
46-47	Antioch, Jerusalem	11	1 year - Antioch	
48-49	First Missionary Journey and Antioch	13-14		Galatians
50	Jerusalem Council and Antioch	15		
51-53	Second Missionary Journey	16-18	18 months - Corinth	1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians
53-54	Antioch			
54-57	Third Missionary Journey	19-21	3 years - Ephesus	1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Romans
57	Jerusalem Arrest	22-23		
57-59	Caesarea Prisoner	24-26	2 years	
59-60	Journey to Rome	27-28		
60-67 circa	Rome House Arrest	28	5-7 years circa	Ephesians Colossians Philemon Philippians 1 Timothy Titus 2 Timothy

C. The Epistles of Paul

Paul provides an understanding of his theological teachings in his epistles (letters). These letters were written to communicate something specific to a particular group of believers. The occasion of the writing, the reason for the letter, is significant to understand in order to understand the writing.

For example, Romans is a theological argument while I & II Corinthians are written in response to specific issues, needs and questions from the Corinthians. The letters to Timothy and Titus were written to young pastors. Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, writes very specifically to the "reader" from exhortation to chastisement to doctrinal explanation. These letters offer a great theological foundation taken from the experiences of the early church.

D. The General Epistles, Hebrews, and Revelation

The additional letters of the New Testament provide a variety of authors and audiences, all centering around some practical purpose for the writing, whether overtly theological or not.

These consist of:

James, Jude, 1, 2, and 3 John, 1 and 2 Peter, Hebrews, and The Revelation

The General Epistles consist of a collection of letters written primarily for general distribution to all churches. These letters are generally named for the person who wrote them through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These are very practical and application-oriented writings. James was written by the half-brother of Jesus.⁶ Jude is traditionally attributed to the brother of James and half-brother of Jesus.⁷ John and Peter wrote their letters as they reflected and learned from walking with Jesus for those 3 ½ years of ministry. Each of these General Epistles is personal, heartfelt, and inspired writings to encourage those Christians in the first century to live out their faith boldly and consistently, which holds true for us even today.
















The work referred to as Hebrews has an unknown author; although some scholars consider it to have overtly Pauline tendencies, all scholars do not agree. Regardless of the author's name, we know the inspiration of the Holy Spirit directed the words to be written. The audience is definitely Jewish, hence the name "Hebrews." Hebrews is written to exalt Jesus Christ as superior to all prophets, priests, or teachers. This book also brings a strong connection to the Old Testament.

Stephen Voorwinde writes,

The Old Testament quotations are plentiful enough. There are forty of them. When it comes to the sheer number of Old Testament quotations in the New Testament epistles, Hebrews is second only to Romans, which has sixty-three quotes. But when it comes to the population density of quotations Hebrews is well in front. Not only is it shorter than Romans but its quotations are generally longer. In the original, the Hebrews quotes total 737 words, which amount to about 15% of its complete content. For Romans, on the other hand, the quotes come to only 639 words or about 9% of the total. So the population density of Old Testament quotes in Hebrews is greater than in any other book of the New Testament. The quotes make up a significant proportion of the Epistle.⁸

The book of Revelation is an account of the Apostle John's visions about future events and is considered to be prophetic, apocalyptic, and an epistle in one book. The word "Revelation" is the Greek word, *Apokalupsis* which means, "unveiling, laying bare, making naked." The opening verse says, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," which sets up what John experiences while in exile on the island of Patmos. These twenty-two chapters are adventurous, to say the least, and can be intimidating without a doubt. However, they ultimately unveil the depths of Jesus and heaven. There is prophecy of the end times, as well as promises of our future home in heaven. Whereas Genesis was the beginning, Revelation is the New Beginning and the New Jerusalem.

14 ERAS

	CREATION ERA	Genesis 1-11	God promises to remove the results of sin through the shedding of the blood of the innocent on behalf of the guilty.
	PATRIARCH ERA	Job Genesis 12-50	God promises Abraham that He will establish a nation from his descendants. Abraham understands that God is fulfilling the promise He made to Eve. God promises to make them numerous, to give them land, and to bless every family on earth through them.
	EXODUS & LAW	Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	
	CONQUEST ERA	Joshua	
	JUDGES / SIN-CYCLE ERA	Judges Ruth	
	KINGDOM ERA	2 Chronicles 1-9 Psalms Proverbs Song of Songs Ecclesiastes	
	DIVIDED KINGDOM ERA	Micah Isaiah Jonah Amos Hosea Nahum Zephaniah Jeremiah Habakkuk Joel	God promises David that his kingdom will be established forever. David understands that God is fulfilling the promise He made to Eve. The Promised One would come from the lineage of David and rule an eternal kingdom.
	DIVIDED KINGDOM ERA	1 Kings 12-22 2 Kings 2 Chronicles 10-36 Obadiah Joel	
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	CAPTIVITY ERA	Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel	Because God's people reject His instructions, promises and prohibitions, God punishes them. However, He renews the promise He made to David by promising to restore the southern kingdom of Judah. God's people understand the promises that God is making in reference to His judgement of the nation and His future restoration of the nation, as a fulfillment of the promise God made to David. By faith, they wait for the Promised One.
	RETURN ERA	Esther Ezra Nehemiah Haggai Zechariah Malachi	
	SILENT ERA		
	GOSPEL ERA	Matthew Mark Luke John	
	CHURCH ERA	Acts Epistles Hebrews	Jesus claimed to be the Promised One. He fulfilled the promise of God by dying on the cross as the worthy sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin. He rose from the grave to demonstrate that He is God and has the power to keep His promises. Jesus appointed His disciples to be witnesses to the world of His resurrection, and He promised to provide them a Helper until He returns to judge the earth. Jesus established the church as the steward of the Good News that God kept His promise to remove the results of sin forever. He commanded His church to proclaim the Good News to every creature on the planet.
	MISSIONS ERA	Same as CHURCH ERA	
	END TIMES / NEW BEGINNINGS	Revelation	

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 <p>CREATION ERA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faith-walkers
 <p>PATRIARCH ERA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingdom-Sized Dreams Job, Faith, and the Revelation of God The Lens of Suffering
 <p>EXODUS & LAW</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The People God Wants The God People Want A Place for God's Name The Day of Atonement People of Unbelief and Rebellion A Clash of Kingdoms People of the Book Blessings and Cursings
 <p>CONQUEST ERA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covenant, Conquest, and Control of the Land
 <p>JUDGES / SIN-CYCLE ERA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Kingdom Stumbles
 <p>KINGDOM ERA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The King Israel Wants The King God Wants The King Who Wants God The Kingdom Loses a Great Leader The King's Prophecy A King Needs God's Wisdom A King Builds a Temple for God's Name Kingdom Wisdom
 <p>DIVIDED KINGDOM ERA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Kingdom Divided, Israel Kingdom Power A Prophet and a Foreign Nation Kingdom Infidelity The King's Singers Kingdom Praise A King Experiences Deliverance A Prophet Sees the King A King Experiences Revival
 <p>CAPTIVITY ERA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Captive Kingdom Kingdom Parable The Last King of Judah Lament Over the Death of a Kingdom Kingdom-Saved Prayers King of Darkest Night
 <p>RETURN ERA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Kingdom Rebuilt
 <p>SILENT ERA</p>	
 <p>GOSPEL ERA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Tested King Kingdom Disposition The Teaching King The King and Prodigals A Misunderstood King The Lamb King
 <p>CHURCH ERA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Empowered Kingdom Kingdom Liberty Kingdom Problems, Kingdom Solutions Suffering and Kingdom Advancement Kingdom Warfare Kingdom Leaders Reflect Christlikeness The High Priest of the Kingdom
 <p>MISSIONS ERA</p>	
 <p>END TIMES / NEW BEGINNINGS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The King Upon His Throne

¹ This information is sourced heavily from *The New Testament: Its Background and Message*, by Thomas D. Lea, Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996.

² Ibid.

³ www.soniclight.com/acts

⁴ <http://resources.takingground.org.uk/category/nt-books/acts/>

⁵ https://www.conformingtojesus.com/charts-maps/en/paul%27s_letters-journeys_chart.htm

⁶ www.soniclight.com/james

⁷ www.soniclight.com/jude

⁸ (<https://www.rtc.edu.au/RTC/media/Documents/Vox%20articles/Hebrews-Use-of-the-Old-Testament-SV-73-2008.pdf?ext=.pdf>)

⁹ www.biblestudytools.com/lexicon