

Week (5) DISCOVERING THE NEW TESTAMENT **God's eternal plan advances in the New Testament.**

Day 21: The Gospels

Scripture Reading: Matthew 1:18-25

Insight: The first four books of the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—are generally referred to as the Gospels. The word Gospel simply means “Good News,” which is an accurate summary of the message of these books. The Gospels focus on the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, with each writer providing a unique perspective for a unique audience. The history and deity of Jesus Christ clearly presents the hope of eternal salvation for humankind. Here we see glimpses of His birth, His development, His ministry, His miracles, and His perfect sacrifice that met God’s requirement for humankind to enter His holy Heaven. This passage points out many significant truths. First, the birth of Jesus Christ was divine; in other words, Mary was a virgin that conceived a child from the Holy Spirit of God, yet, by her own admission, she also needed God’s mercy. Second, Jesus Christ came for the express purpose of providing salvation for helpless sinners. Finally, Jesus Christ was the direct fulfillment of prophecy.

Reflection:

What is the “Good News” presented in the Gospels?

Why did Jesus Christ come to earth?

How does the life and ministry of Jesus Christ affect salvation?

How does the divine conception of Jesus Christ’s relate to His nature?

Principle: Jesus Christ fulfilled the expectation of the Old Testament.



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Day 22: The Acts of the Apostles

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:36-47

Insight: The apostles were a group of men specifically commissioned by Jesus Christ to build His church after He ascended into Heaven. They were given specific gifts from the Holy Spirit of God to confirm that Jesus Christ was the Messiah and to prove the Spirit-filled authenticity of their leadership. The book of Acts is essentially a history of the first-century church: recording the ascension of Christ, the dramatic coming of the Holy Spirit to launch the church era, and the spread of the Gospel to a variety of people groups through key apostolic leaders. This passage portrays Peter, who had previously turned against Jesus Christ, preaching to a large group of people gathered in Jerusalem for the ultimate religious observance of the Jews. Peter boldly and logically presents Jesus Christ as the Son of God and hope of eternal, but testifies that humankind had crucified their long-awaited hope. The observers repented of their sin and joined together as a church to learn, support, and testify.

Reflection:

What distinguished the group of apostles?

Why was the concept of a church necessitated by Jesus Christ's ascension?

What was the focus of Peter's message?

What were the characteristics of these early believers in Jesus Christ?

Principle: The church rallied around the teachings of Jesus Christ.



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Day 23: The Pauline Letters

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10

Insight: Thirteen of the twenty-seven New Testament books are attributed to the Apostle Paul. Paul was known for his relentless persecution of the church until he was confronted with the truth of Jesus Christ. After this point, Paul transferred his efforts from persecuting the church to building the church, and is largely responsible for spreading the Good News of salvation into Asia and Europe. His ministry and testimony was consumed with appreciation for God's mercy in forgiving his sin and God's grace in offering eternal life through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This passage starts with a vivid description of the helplessness of humanity because of the destructive nature of sin—literally we are dead in our sin, unable to come into the presence of a holy God. Yet, God loved His creation by offering mercy from the judgment of sin and by offering grace through His perfect Son, Jesus Christ. Salvation from sin is only possible through Jesus Christ; good works cannot merit salvation, but salvation will inspire good works.

Reflection:

What jumps out about Paul's contributions to Christianity?

How does Paul describe humanity in its natural state?

Why did God extend mercy and grace to humanity?

What privileges are offered by embracing the sacrifice of Jesus Christ?

Principle: Paul confirmed the significance of God's plan.



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Day 24: The General Letters

Scripture Reading: I John 1:1-10

Insight: The remaining New Testament letters (Hebrews, James, I and II Peter, I, II, and III John, and Jude) were written for a variety of purposes and audiences. As Christianity in its purest form began to spread throughout the world, a variety of questions and errors began to appear. Many of these introductory issues were addressed by early leaders under inspiration of God's Spirit to ensure that Christianity as a faith remained true to the teachings of Jesus Christ and timeless revelation of God. Despite opposition, God used ordinary people and ordinary methods to relay His unchanging words of life. John begins this passage by appealing to the physical authority of Jesus Christ's ministry as the basis of his letter. He describes God as light in opposition to the darkness of sin, and asserts that no darkness can enter God's presence. No human being can live a sinless life, but the perfect blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from sin and provides the ability to fellowship with God in His holiness.

Reflection:

What would be some natural reasons to write a New Testament letter?

Why has God's Word been transmitted in written form?

How does the analogy of light and darkness translate into real life?

What is significant about the blood of Jesus Christ?

Principle: God miraculously led human beings to convey His message.



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Day 25: The Apocalyptic Literature

Scripture Reading: Revelation 20:11-21:8

Insight: God uses apocalyptic literature to reveal the future events that will confront humanity. Apocalyptic literature is often equated with the book of Revelation, but prophecy is scattered throughout the entirety of the New Testament. God's Word presents enough information about the future that we can prepare for it, but not so much that we can predict it. Revelation relates the events that will accompany the end of humankind's existence on this earth, culminating in every individual's confrontation with eternity. God existed eternally before creating mankind in the sphere of time with the ultimate purpose of glorifying Him. He has been gracious to sinful humankind, yet God will also end human existence on earth. One day, everyone will face eternity either in Heaven with God's presence or in Hell with sin's horror. This passage describes the implications of one's eternal destiny based on the timeless choice of obeying God's plan to experience life or rejecting God's provision to suffer death.

Reflection:

What is compelling about knowing the future?

Why does God want us to understand the implications of eternity?

How is God's eternal existence different from our bondage to time?

Why does this passage demand our utmost attention?

Principle: God conveys the eternal implications of choices made in this life.



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Additional Study

The Birth of Jesus Christ: Luke 2:4-7

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The Development of Jesus Christ: Luke 2:52

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The Ministry of Jesus Christ as fulfillment of God's Promise: Luke 4:17-21

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The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ: Luke 23:33-34

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The Resurrection of Jesus Christ: Luke 24:44-46

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The Ascension and Commission of Jesus Christ: Acts 1:8-9

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The Establishment of the Church: Acts 2:47

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The Admonition to be Faithful to the Apostles' Leadership: II Timothy 1:13

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The Certainty of Future Events: Revelation 22:18-21

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Personal Journal

What are some significant historical contributions of Jesus Christ?

How did Jesus Christ provide for man's greatest need?

What provisions did Jesus Christ promise His believers?

What is the recurring theme within the New Testament?

How does the truth of the New Testament affect me?

How do I feel about facing eternity?

"JESUS CHRIST: THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND FOREVER"

