

Introduction to the Christian Scriptures, the New Testament

We can read the Bible through many lenses. Our chosen lens will determine the emphasis of our teaching, preaching, and proclamation to the hearers.

I. Different Lenses for Reading the Bible

Consider the various lenses through which we view the Bible. Each approach shapes our interpretation and application:

Lenses we read and study the Bible through...

Christology - Christ
Soteriology - Salvation
Miracles
Prosperity
Hebrew culture
Covenant
Dispensations
Sacraments
Doctrine
Eschatology - last times
Personal
Communal
Paternal - the Father
Maternal - the woman or female
Pneumatology - The Holy Spirit
Worship
Feast
Ecclesiology
Prophecy

Humanity
Grace
Faith
Judgment
Blackness
Missions
Justice
Love
Mercy
Kingdom

How are you reading this year?

- Historical lens: What was the context during the time of writing?
- Theological lens: What does the text reveal about God, Christ, and salvation?
- Practical lens: How can the teachings be applied in our lives today?

II. Date and Time of the New Testament

Time Period:

- The New Testament was written in the 1st century AD, mostly between 50-100 AD.

Authors of the New Testament:

- The New Testament was written by various authors, including apostles like Matthew, John, and

Paul, as well as other early Christian leaders such as Luke and James.

Place of Composition:

- The New Testament books were written in different locations across the Roman Empire, including Israel, Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), Greece, and possibly Rome. Other nations are also mentioned in several of the narratives such as Egypt, Cyrene which is North Africa, and Antioch of Syria. Historically north Africa had great influence on early Christian thought from the day of Pentecost Forward.

Audiences Addressed:

- The New Testament addresses diverse groups, including Jewish and Gentile Christians, various churches in the Mediterranean region, and specific individuals.
- Structure of the New Testament:
 - Gospels and Acts: Focus on the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus and the early church.
 - Epistles (Letters): Teachings and guidance for early Christian communities, primarily authored by Paul and other apostles.
 - Revelation: A prophetic book revealing the end times, the revealing of Christ, and the ultimate triumph of Christ.

III. Key Themes to Explore for Rhema Christian Center:

These are guidelines not to restrict the orator, teacher, preacher, or instructor in the Bible study. But simple guidelines, to bring cohesiveness for the students, hearers, and participants to receive collectively, as well as individually as they study, listen, and research on their own.

1. Looking for Jesus in Every Book:

- Where is Jesus? What is He doing? What is He saying? What lessons can we learn from Him?

2. Kingdom Principles:

- What are the implications of the Kingdom of God for what we are teaching and learning? How can we advance the Kingdom using these principles?

3. Leadership Lessons:

- Jesus serves as our model for leadership. What can we learn about leadership by studying the examples of Jesus and the apostles?

4. Practical Application of the Truth:

- How can we apply what we learn to our daily lives? Are there tensions between the original context and modern-day application? What is the Holy Spirit Our teacher telling us today?

IV. Other considerations may include:

27 Canonized Books of the New Testament

Introduction 1: Overview of the New Testament

1. 27 Canonical Books: The New Testament is made up of 27 books, canonized by early Christian councils and central to Christian doctrine.
2. Focus on Jesus Christ: These writings primarily center on the life, teachings, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.
3. Four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John each offer unique perspectives on Jesus' life and ministry.
4. Pauline Epistles: 13 letters are attributed to the Apostle Paul, addressing theological and ethical challenges in early Christian communities.
5. Revelation: The final book, an apocalyptic vision, offers insights into the end times and the hope of Jesus' return.

Historical and Theological Development:

1. Gradual Canonization: The 27 books were selected over centuries, considering apostolic authorship and widespread acceptance among Christian communities.
2. Diverse Genres: The New Testament includes Gospels, historical narratives (Acts), letters (Epistles), and apocalyptic literature (Revelation).

3. Theological Core: Key themes include the divinity of Jesus, salvation through faith in Him, the role of the Church, and the coming of God's Kingdom.
4. Authority and Doctrine: These writings are considered divinely inspired and authoritative, forming the foundation for Christian doctrine.
5. Unity and Diversity: Despite the range of authors and genres, the New Testament offers a unified message: Jesus is the Messiah and Savior, though different books emphasize various aspects of Christian belief.

Some Source references:

Matthew from the Margins *Dr. Warren Carter*

How Africa Shaped Early Christian Thought *Dr. Thomas C Oden*

Commentary on the New Testament *Dr. Margaret Aymer*

Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes *Dr. Kenneth E Bailey*

New International Commentary on the New Testament
(various authors)

*Rhema Christian Center
Bishop La Fayette Scales
Tuesday & Wednesday Bible Study
October 22 & 23, 2024
6:30 pm & 12:00 noon*