

SESSION FOUR -- THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament is the second major part of the Christian Bible. The distinctive teachings of the Christian faith are found in the New Testament. The following overview helps us understand its significance by comparing it with the Old Testament.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

1. The Old Testament consists of 39 books (or 46, counting the Apocrypha).
The New Testament consists of 27 books.
2. The Old Testament books were written over approximately ten centuries, from the 15th to the 5th century before Christ (BC or BCE).
The New Testament books were written over approximately 50 years, in the second half of the first century (AD or CE).
3. The Old Testament was written in the Hebrew language.
The New Testament was written in Greek, the common language (*lingua franca*) of the Eastern Roman Empire.
4. The Old Testament is about a People, Israel.
The New Testament is about a Person, Jesus.
5. Both Jews and Christians recognize the Old Testament as Scripture.
Only Christians recognize the New Testament as Scripture.
6. Jewish Bibles contain only the Old Testament (sometimes referred to as the Hebrew Scriptures).
Christian Bibles generally contain both the Old and New Testaments.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

1. The New Testament writings generally presuppose the reader's knowledge of the Old Testament and frequently quote from it.
2. Christians believe that the New Testament demonstrates the fulfillment of the Old Testament's promises and prophecies, particularly those concerning the Messiah. (The title "Christ" means "Messiah" or "Anointed One.")

FOUR TYPES OF NEW TESTAMENT WRITINGS

1. GOSPELS (4 BOOKS)
 - Accounts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - Written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John respectively

2. ACTS OF THE APOSTLES (1 BOOK)
 - Written by Luke
 - History of the early Church and the spread of Christianity into new lands

3. LETTERS (OR 'EPISTLES'—21 BOOKS)
 - Most written by Apostles (e.g., Paul, Peter, James, John)
 - Letter to the Hebrews—Unknown Author
 - Some were written to specific churches in specific places (e.g. Romans)
 - Some written to specific people (e.g., Timothy)
 - Some written to all Christians everywhere (General Epistles)

4. APOCALYPSE (OR REVELATION—1 BOOK)
 - Attributed to the Apostle John
 - Written in exile on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea
 - Visions of the future, the end of the world, and the return of Christ

FUN FACTS

- The Old Testament books were often written on parchment, made from dried animal skins
- The New Testament books were written on papyrus, a type of thick paper made from the papyrus plant, which grows in wet soils and shallow waters, especially along the River Nile in Egypt
- Writings on parchment were often rolled up in scrolls (still used in Jewish synagogues)
- By New Testament times, writings on both parchment and papyrus were often folded and fastened together in a codex, an early type of book

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QUIZ

MATCH THE FOLLOWING:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Apocalypse | a. Paper made from dried animal skin |
| 2. Codex | b. Books telling story of Jesus' life |
| 3. Epistle | c. Writing containing visions of the future |
| 4. Acts of the Apostles | d. Paper made from plants in River Nile |
| 5. Parchment | e. Book made from sheets of parchment or papyrus folded and sewn together |
| 6. Papyrus | f. Letter |
| 8. Gospels | g. Book made from rolled up parchment |
| 7. Scroll | h. Book telling history of early Church |

NAME THE FOUR PRINCIPAL KINDS OF WRITINGS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:

_____ -- tell the story of the life of Jesus.

_____ -- a history of the early Church.

_____ -- letters of the apostles.

_____ -- book containing visions of the future.

NAME THE FOUR GOSPELS:

_____, _____, _____, and _____.