

The New Testament

We have spent some time introducing the writing and transmission of the Old Testament before the time of Christ. We will now turn our attention to the writing of the New Testament, and we will then move on to discuss the history of translation.

The New Testament developed in three stages: the Living Truth, the Oral Tradition, and the Written Communication.

First, up until 30 AD, Jesus was living on Earth as the eternal word of God become flesh (John 1). The word of the Gospel existed both in Jesus' person and in His teachings. Jesus proclaimed of Himself, "I AM the Way, the Truth, and Life" (John 14:6). He said, "Learn of me" and "Follow me." He said, "The words I have spoken are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). The word of God was alive and present in the very person of Jesus Christ.

Second, for 10-20 years after Jesus, His words were passed on in the Christ community through an oral tradition. The Holy Spirit guided the Apostles and preachers to teach Jesus' message. And the Christians generally memorized and retold the stories about Jesus and His sayings. Such storytelling was common in the ancient world, where books were rare and people could memorize vast tracts of information. Jesus' story and words continued on after Him through the Holy Spirit and the memories of His followers.

Third, starting in about 50 AD and lasting for another fifty years, the story of Jesus and His early church began to be written

down. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit inspired the writing of other letters and sermons that eventually came to be collected together into what we know as the 27 books of the New Testament.

Jesus lived with His disciples and taught them for three years. And before He left them, He promised that God would send the Holy Spirit who would "bring all things to your remembrance" (John 14:26). Thus, Paul could say, "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16).

Paul would later write letters to the Gentile churches. Peter would write to the Hebrew Christians, etc. The youngest Apostle, John, would outlive them all, and as a very old man received a vision that he wrote down known as, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. By the end of the first century, all the books were written and the foundation was set to collect and combine the writing into the New Testament of the Bible.

One last point—a very important point! This all marks the beginning of how the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ spread like wildfire through the Roman Empire. In certain times and places the young church would face great pressure and persecution. But the people endured and God continued to grow His Kingdom here on Earth. Over the centuries to follow, many tens of thousands of God's children would suffer and die for the sake of Jesus' name and the Book. And that is just the beginning of the story of how we got the Bible we read today.

Let us never take for granted the great sacrifice our brothers and sisters of old made in order for us to hear the gospel and live for Jesus. May we also offer our lives as living sacrifices for the sake of the gospel.

Cherish God's word! Read it. Memorize it. Allow it to change you. Obey it. And share it with others.

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