

Unit 1 Study Guide

Introduction to the Bible

Why Study the New Testament???

- The Bible is the all-time best seller!
- The New Testament (and the entire Bible) is God's Word and God's revealed truth.
- The Bible communicates and reveals the message of salvation.
- The New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises (Matthew 5:17; 2 Corinthians 1:20).
- The New Testament is the testimony about Jesus Christ.
 - God incarnate; God in human flesh; True God come as true human
- The Bible is God's Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- The Bible addresses the most pressing questions of life.
 - Augustine, *Confessions* – "O Lord, You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you."

What is the Bible?

- A collection of 66 books which detail the history of ancient Israel and the beginning of the Christian faith
- Two Basic Divisions
 - Old Testament – 39 books which tell the history of ancient Israel
 - New Testament – 27 books which detail the beginning of the Christian faith

What makes up the New Testament?

- Gospels (biographical accounts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ) (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)
- Acts (history of the early church)
- Letters of Paul (13 letters) (Romans to Philemon)
- General Letters/Epistles (Hebrews to Jude)
- Revelation (apocalypse)

Convictions About the Bible

- 1) The Bible is God's Word.
- 2) The Bible is relevant to us now.

The Bible is God's Word.

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 – “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (NIV)
 - “God-breathed”
 - Authoritative – the final authority for life and faith
 - True/Inerrant – without error and contradiction in the original documents

The Bible is relevant to us now!

- Ancient book
- Why relevant???
 - Same God, same world, same kind of people¹
 - “All Scripture”
 - “useful”
 - “thoroughly equipped” – Scripture is to be applied!
 - See also Matthew 7:24-29 and James 1:22-25

Why These 66 Books??

- Old Testament – 39 books
 - Written by God's prophets or others inspired by God
 - In agreement with previous revelation²
 - Accepted by God's people
 - Affirmed by Jesus – Luke 24:44
- New Testament – 27 books (Divine Authorship of the New Testament)
 - Old Testament precedent for canon
 - Jesus' Promises (John 14:26; John 15:26-27; John 16:12-14)
 - Written by apostles/eyewitnesses or in the community of the apostles/eyewitnesses

¹ Pratt, Richard (2002). “Hermeneutics” course lectures, Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando.

² Arnold, Bill T. and Bryan E. Beyer. (2008). *Encountering the Old Testament: A Christian Survey*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic.

Biblical Covenants

Why are Biblical Covenants Important?

1. God relates to people by entering into covenants with them.
2. God expands and administers his Kingdom through covenants.

Major Covenants in the Bible

- Adam (Genesis 1-3)
- Noah (Genesis 6-9)
- Abraham (Genesis 12, 15, 17)
- Moses/Israel (Exodus 19-24)
- David (2 Samuel 7:11-16; Psalms 89, 132)
- New covenant in Jesus Christ (Jeremiah 31:31; Ezekiel 37:26; Luke 22:20; 2 Corinthians 3:6)

New Covenant

- Represents the fulfillment of the promises and prophecies in the old covenant
- New Testament = new covenant
- Fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies
- Fulfillment of Old Testament promises
- Old Testament pictures/shadows are now reality
 - o Examples
 - Old Testament sacrificial system was a picture of the Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross (reality)
 - The Land of Promise was a picture of eternal rest in the new heaven and new earth (reality) (see Hebrews 4)
- Old Testament promises and prophecies of a worldwide and global Kingdom of God will come to fulfillment (see Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8)
- Salvation in the new covenant = the same as in the old covenant
 - o By grace – gift of God, not by works (not earned)
 - o Through faith
 - o Accomplished by Jesus Christ
 - Old Testament/Covenant – looked forward to the work of Christ
 - New Testament/Covenant – salvation has been accomplished in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection

The Kingdom of God

The Bible is One Book that Tells One Story

- In general – Creation, Fall, Redemption/Salvation
- More specific - the Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God is the Storyline of the Bible³

- God creates humanity in his image and humanity is called to rule!
- God has called humanity to rule and to extend his reign throughout the earth!
- Key Scriptures
 - Genesis 1:26-30
 - What does it mean to be made in the image of God?
 - Genesis 1:28 (The Cultural Mandate)
 - Be fruitful and increase in number
 - Fill the earth and subdue it
 - Psalm 8
 - Reflection on humanity's God-given role and authority to rule over creation
 - Matthew 6:9-13
 - "...your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."
(Matthew 6:10)

What is the Kingdom of God? / Defining the Kingdom of God

- God's reign on the earth as it is in heaven
 - See the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 7:9-13)
- "God's people in God's place under God's rule and blessing"⁴

³ Roberts, Vaughan. (2002). *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books.

⁴ Roberts, *God's Big Picture*.

New Testament Vision of the Kingdom of God

- Jewish Expectation
 - When the Messiah came, the Kingdom would come very quickly.
- Jesus' Teaching on the Kingdom of God
 - Matthew 13:31-32 – The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed....”
 - The Kingdom will start small and then grow into a large Kingdom.
 - The Kingdom will undergo a long process of growth and development.
 - Matthew 13:24-29, 36-43 – The Parable of the Weeds
 - The Kingdom of God is present (Mark 1:15; Luke 4:14-21)
 - The Kingdom of God is future (Matthew 26:29/Mark 14:25/Luke 27:18; Matthew 8:11)
- New Testament Revelation of the Kingdom of God (Putting it all together)⁵
 - Inauguration – Jesus' first coming (Jesus' life, death, and resurrection) (Mark 1:15; Luke 4:14-21; Mark 1-5)
 - Continuation – the entire time period between Jesus' first and second coming; growth and expansion of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:6-8; Matthew 24:14; Luke 24:46-53)
 - Consummation – Jesus' second coming in glory and power (Revelation 5:9-10; Revelation 11:15; Revelation 21-22)

⁵ The terms “Inauguration,” “Continuation,” and “Consummation” are from Richard Pratt’s Hermeneutics course at Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando, Spring 2002, although it is common language to speak of the Kingdom as “inaugurated” at Christ’s first coming and “consummated” at Christ’s second coming.

Introduction to the Gospels

- “Gospel” = good news
 - Old Testament background – Isaiah 52:7 – good news connected with the coming of God’s Kingdom
 - New Testament – good news is also connected with the coming of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15)
 - Jesus’ disciples proclaimed the good news of Jesus Christ through oral proclamation
 - There was also a need for written versions of the good news of Jesus Christ
 - Apostles would die one day
 - The gospel spread very quickly to places all over the world

Characteristics of the Gospels⁶

- Historical
- Narrative
- Theological
- Biographical

Relationships Between the Gospels

- Synoptic gospels – Matthew; Mark; Luke
 - “synoptic” – viewed together
 - Similar content, common material
 - Literary relationship between these three gospels
 - Most scholars believe Mark was written first
- Gospel of John – almost completely unique; over 90% of the content is unique to the Gospel of John

⁶ The first three characteristics of the gospel genre (historical, narrative, and theological) are from Strauss, Mark L. (2007). *Four Portraits, One Jesus: A Survey of Jesus and the Gospels*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.

The Gospel of Mark

- Introduction to the Gospel of Mark
 - Author = John Mark (close associate of Peter and Paul)
 - Gospel of Mark is anonymous
 - Title “According to Mark” added very early
 - Church tradition maintains that John Mark wrote the gospel
 - Many scholars believe Mark was the first of the 4 gospels to be written
 - Fast-moving narrative style; vivid details; style is similar to an action movie
 - Central Theme of the Gospel of Mark – “Jesus the mighty Messiah and Son of God obediently suffers as the Servant of the Lord to pay the ransom price for sins, and as a model of suffering and sacrifice for his disciples to follow.”⁷
 - Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God
 - As the Messiah, Jesus inaugurates and ushers in the Kingdom of God
 - Jesus dies on the cross as a ransom for others and a sacrifice for sin
 - Jesus calls his followers to lives of discipleship, service, and suffering
 - Key Verse – Mark 10:45 – “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”⁸
- Key Question in the Gospel of Mark – Who is Jesus?!
 - Mark 1:1 – “The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God”
 - The reader knows that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God!
 - Jesus identified as God’s Son at his baptism (Mark 1:11)
 - Mark 1:15 – Jesus proclaims, “The time has come...The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”
 - Jesus proclaims that the Kingdom of God has arrived with him...because he is the Messiah and King!
 - Evidence that Jesus is the Messiah and that the Kingdom has come (Mark 1-8)
 - Casting out demons, healing the sick, power over nature, raising the dead, teaching with authority, preaching the good news
 - The demons know who Jesus is (Mark 1:24; 1:34; 3:11; 5:7)
 - The people wonder who Jesus is (Mark 1:27)
 - The disciples wonder who Jesus is (Mark 4:41)
 - Jesus commands the demons and people not to reveal his identity (Mark 1:25; 1:34; 1:43; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36)
- Peter correctly identifies who Jesus is (Mark 8:27-30) – “You are the Messiah.” (turning point of the Gospel of Mark)
 - Peter does not understand Jesus’ mission as the Messiah (Mark 8:31-33)

⁷ Strauss, Mark L. (2007). *Four Portraits, One Jesus: A Survey of Jesus and the Gospels*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, p. 172.

⁸ Key Verse also identified by Strauss, *Four Portraits*, p. 172.

- Jesus teaches the disciples about his identity and mission as the Messiah
 - Mark 8:31-38
 - Mark 9:30-32
 - Mark 10:32-45
 - The disciples do not understand Jesus' mission or their call to discipleship
- Key Verse – Mark 10:45 – “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
 - 2 Key Points from Mark 10:45
 - Jesus will die on the cross as a ransom for others and a sacrifice for sin
 - Jesus calls his followers to lives of discipleship, service, and suffering
- Those who witnessed the resurrection do not understand Jesus' mission or his death on the cross (Mark 15:21-32)
- Confession of the Roman centurion – “Surely this man was the Son of God!” (Mark 15:39) (unlikely person to understand Jesus' identity)
- The Resurrection of Jesus (Mark 16:1-8)
 - The Gospel of Mark ends at Mark 16:8 (subsequent verses were added later – see the note in the Bible)
 - The ending is abrupt and mysterious – “Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.” (Mark 16:8)
 - The ending invites the reader to decide for himself or herself the question of the Gospel of Mark: Who is Jesus?