
Fort Hill Christian Youth Camp 2026

Class Curriculum - Back to the Bible

Age - Senior Campers

Thursday - The New Testament

Summary

1. Subject: A brief overview (otherwise known as a “survey”) of the New Testament
2. Scripture: John 20:30-31, John 21:25
3. Grade/Level: Senior Campers
4. Objective: Learn about the chronological timeline of the events of the New Testament, as well as the genre of each section of its writings.
5. Time Allotment: 1 Hour

Prayer: Don't forget to begin and end your class with a prayer! If possible, have a camper lead one or both of these prayers.

Lesson

Overview: This week's classes will focus on “Back to the Bible”. This entails an overview of the Old and New Testaments, as well as the inspiration and inerrancy of scripture. By the end of the week, all campers should be confident that the Bible is the complete and perfect word of God: sufficient for everyone to have an everlasting relationship with God.

Today's lesson will focus on a survey of the New Testament. This is the written record of the covenant established by Jesus Christ. The New Testament—being inspired by God—is an accurate account of the Son of God and serves as a complete guide to everyone who seeks to follow Him today. While most of the New Testament is intuitive to the average reader, it is still essential to be taught the basic framework so that any camper will be able to read each book and understand its meaning.



Chronology of the New Testament

The timeline of the New Testament is much simpler than the Old. The events begin slightly before the birth of Jesus, starting with the pregnancy and birth of John the Baptist, around 6-4 BC. While there is one story during the childhood of Jesus, the timeline mostly skips until Jesus is 30 years old and begins his public ministry. This takes place over the course of about three years. At the end of His ministry, He is crucified, and three days later He rises from the dead. After 40 days on earth in His resurrected state, He ascends to Heaven, after which we read the events in the book of Acts. The book of Acts spans about thirty years and records the growth of the early church, the conversion of Saul/Paul, and Paul's missionary journeys.

During and after the recorded events, which concluded in ~60 AD, God inspired the writing of many letters. These letters give insight into the early church, and in some ways continue the chronology, but they are not records of events. There is much debate about when Revelation was written, but it was likely the last completed book of the New Testament. Like the letters, it is not a formal record of events, so it only continues the chronology insofar as it provides details about the apostle John (its author) and the state of the churches to whom it is addressed.

With all of that in mind, the events of the New Testament span roughly 100 years. The greatest focus should be on the three years of Jesus's public ministry, ending with His sacrifice and resurrection. The following history of the Church and letters to congregations help us to further understand the works, teachings, and impact of Jesus.

John 20:30-31, John 21:25

These two passages, at the end of the Gospel of John, are a beautiful reminder of the scope of the events of the New Testament. Everything recorded in the Gospels is not a comprehensive account of everything Jesus ever said and did. Likewise, there were certainly many significant events within the early church, and even other inspired letters that were not included in the canon of scripture. The New Testament is not designed to be a history textbook; it has been preserved by God for one purpose: that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that we may find eternal life in Him.

Genres of the New Testament

The books of the New Testament are written in multiple genres, and understanding them will help us as we read through each book. The Gospels are sometimes referred to as their own unique genre; they are not entirely history, nor are they entirely theology—they are a mixture of the two. In truth, they are similar to contemporary biographies and should be understood as biographical accounts of Jesus Christ. That being said, they are not like modern biographies that simply recount the events of one’s life. They are persuasive, each Gospel with its own goal. Matthew recounts the events of Christ with the goal of showing that He is the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament. Mark recounts the life of Christ to a general audience, with the goal of showing that Christ is everyone’s savior who came to serve, suffer, and be sacrificed. Luke is perhaps the most like a modern biography, as he states his goal is to provide “an orderly account” of the life of Christ, to give the reader “certainty concerning the things you have been taught” (1:3-4). John’s gospel is the most unique of the four, and recounts fewer of the events yet many of the teachings of Jesus, with the goal of showing that Jesus is divine: the Son of God, and God Himself.

There is only one true “history” book in the New Testament, and that comes after the gospels: the Acts of the Apostles. It recounts many of the events of the early church, including the work of Peter and other apostles, the conversion of Saul to Paul, the missionary journeys of Paul, and more.

After Acts, there is a collection of letters, called epistles. They are best split into two groups: the epistles written by Paul, and the General Epistles written by others. Paul wrote Romans through Philemon, and his epistles range in their content, but all have a similar tone. They are typically targeted to a specific person or church around their particular circumstance. The General Epistles (Hebrews through Jude) have a much wider variety in them, and have less congregational/personal context that would impact their message.

Finally, Revelation is a prophecy, and its genre is known as “apocalyptic literature”. This is similar to parts of Isaiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel, and uses extreme imagery to convey eternal truths. We know that Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled by specific events, so it is natural to assume that every image in Revelation will have a real-world fulfillment as well. Some believe those fulfillments happened in the years immediately following the writing of Revelation, while others believe those events will happen at the end times (either literally, according to the image, or metaphorically, according to its symbolism), and still others believe that the prophecies are slowly unfolding throughout history. While the specific prophetic fulfillments are debatable, apocalyptic literature can be best understood by the general truth it is conveying, which, in Revelation, is that God is more powerful than all forms of evil.

DISCUSSION

Remaining Time

Guided Discussion:

The New Testament is the source of our knowledge of Jesus Christ and His New Covenant. It is not like the Old Testament, which outlines all of the commandments in sequence. Ask, “How do we know what to do in the New Covenant?” There are many correct answers to this question:

- When someone asks Jesus what the most important commandment is, Jesus answers “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” and follows with a second commandment to love others (Matt 22:37-40). This is a summary of what we are commanded to do, and other commandments come from these two.
- A good summary of the New Covenant expectations is found in **Colossians 3:1-17**. This passage emphasizes the heart of the New Covenant—to be like Christ. Helpfully, Paul lists several groups of sins to avoid and lists several spiritual qualities to adhere to. These lists are not comprehensive, but they are good summaries.
- There is no simple rubric of what to do and what not to do. The New Covenant is more similar to a journey than a checklist. We begin by placing our faith in Jesus, and we become Christians by confessing that faith before baptism. After that, our faith continually grows as we learn more about Christ. The more we learn about Him and His teachings, the more we realize how we can act like Him. The “full checklist” is scattered throughout the entire New Testament, and it is our job to continually study God’s word and allow it to shape us throughout our lives.

Concerning the events after the life of Christ, ask, “Why do you think it is important that we study the early church?” Churches of Christ are notorious for modeling their practices by the pattern of the early church, and this is intentional. There are many practical insights where God’s inspired word guides the early church through conflict and false teaching, so we can learn the same lessons. Additionally, the early church was planted by Peter and the other apostles, who all spent a long time in the presence of Jesus and were inspired by God. The way in which they constructed the habits of the church is certainly the way in which God intended His church to function. So it is wise to model ourselves after the pattern we find in the New Testament.