

How to Study the Bible
(Lesson 7)

Introduction:

1. Lesson 7 is the first of 2 based on "How to Study the New Testament."
2. The first 5 books of the New Testament are primarily historical; however, they may be subdivided as:
 - a. the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)
 - b. Acts.
3. Before we briefly examine these books, let us consider several matters pertaining to . . .

Discussion:

I. THE INTER-TESTAMENTAL PERIOD

- A. Approximately 400 years passed between the conclusion of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament.
- B. To fully understand the New Testament, we must be familiar with several religious and political developments during this period.
 1. Religiously,:
 - a. a number of sects arose among the Jews, including:
 - 1) the Pharisees (Acts 23:8)
 - 2) the Sadducees (Acts 23:8)
 - 3) the Essenes
 - 4) the Zealots (Luke 6:15)
 - 5) the Herodians (Matthew 22:15-16)
 - b. the synagogue developed.
 2. Politically, the Romans controlled Palestine, although they gave the Jews many freedoms in governing themselves.
- C. The geographical boundaries of Palestine changed with the passing of time.

II. THE GOSPELS

- A. The Gospels present the biography of Christ.
- B. Their primary purpose is stated in John 20:30-31.
- C. The Gospels were recorded by 4 writers and for different audiences.
 1. Matthew
 - a. Matthew was a tax collector and an apostle (Matthew 9:9; 10:2-4).
 - b. He wrote primarily for Jewish people, emphasizing the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies by Jesus (Matthew 1:22-23; 4:12-16).
 2. Mark
 - a. Mark was a cousin of Barnabas and accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey (Acts 12:25; 13:4-5).
 - b. He seems to have been very close to Peter (1 Peter 5:13).
 - c. He wrote primarily for the Romans, emphasizing Jesus' great power (Mark 1:34).
 3. Luke
 - a. Luke was a Gentile physician who traveled with Paul (Colossians 4:14).
 - b. He wrote primarily for the Greeks, emphasizing the complete development of Jesus (Luke 2:52).
 4. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are sometimes called "the Synoptic Gospels" because they are so similar [a "Harmony of the Gospels" is very helpful when studying these books].
 5. John
 - a. John was a fisherman and an apostle (Matthew 4:21-22; 10:2-4).
 - b. John wrote after the other Gospel writers, including a great amount of additional information to counteract false doctrines about Jesus' divinity.

III. ACTS

- A. Acts records the establishment of the church, its growth, and its early history.
- B. It contains many examples of "conversions" and stresses the missionary work of Paul.