

What is the Purpose of the New Testament?

As a unique collection of inspired writings, the New Testament is the ultimate witness of God's incredible love for the human family.

Godless, humanist skeptics today view the New Testament as nothing but a collection of cleverly concocted myths designed to establish a religious movement or to create vast ecclesiastical empires to rule over men. However, the *truth*—which can be proven—is that the New Testament is the divinely inspired account of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Whose life and teachings fulfilled hundreds of prophecies of the Old Testament. It is a message from God the Father and Jesus Christ to all mankind, not only to the wealthy and educated, but—even more importantly—to the *common* man and woman. Its “God-breathed” teachings set forth the Father’s entire plan for man’s salvation—called the “gospel of grace” and “the gospel of the kingdom of God.” The New Testament proclaims God the Father’s love for us, demonstrated by His forgiveness of our sins, and reveals the way to eternal life through Jesus Christ, as summarized in John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life.” **It is the most magnificent book in the world—greater than the Old Testament because the New Testament interprets the Old. Combined, the New and Old Testaments constitute the entire Word of God revealed to the world.**

The New Testament is God the Father’s personal revelation of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Jesus was no ordinary man, wisdom-teacher or religious sage! He was God manifested in the flesh (I Tim. 3:16)—the Creator, the LORD God of the Old Testament—the Word, the one Who *became* Jesus Christ (John 1:1-4, 9-14).

Why Was the New Testament Written?

The ultimate reason for the New Testament’s writing is found in the rebellious refusal of God’s children throughout the ages to heed His guidance and admonishment. Adam and Eve rejected God’s Law in the Garden of Eden by taking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3). In Moses’ time—when God was thundering His perfect Law from Mount Sinai—the children of Israel justified their refusal to obey on the grounds that His voice was frightening. Terrified, the children of Israel drew back and said to Moses, “**You speak with us, and we will hear. But let not God speak with us, lest we die**” (Exodus 20:19).

Although the children of Israel promised to willingly heed Moses, they did not. Only a year and a half after they left Egypt, Moses announced that God was ready to lead them into the promised land, but—in disbelief—they refused to go (Num. 14). As a result, God sentenced them to wander aimlessly in the wilderness for forty years. In spite of this punishment, time and again the Israelites rebelled against God and Moses.

Moses’ Prophecy About Jesus Christ: God remembered the words of the children of Israel when they refused to listen to Him at Sinai—and that they said they would willingly listen to a *man*. However, during their wanderings, they failed to listen to the man Moses as promised. Ever patient, God purposed to give them another chance. He revealed through Moses that He would send another *man*—a prophet like Moses. If they failed to heed this prophet, they would no longer have an excuse. “The LORD your God will **raise up unto you a Prophet from the midst of you, of your brethren, One like me**. To Him you shall hearken.... [And I] will put My words in His mouth. And He shall speak to them all that I shall command Him. And it shall come to pass, whatever man will not hearken to My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require *it* of him” (Deut. 18:15, 18-19).

God Became a Man: In order to carry out Moses' prophecy, the Word—Who pre-existed as the Creator God—came in the flesh as a man to speak with men (John 1). Jesus was that man—the Son of God, born of the virgin Mary. God sent Christ to reveal the Father's love and grace and His eternal plan for mankind. He also came to reveal the Father Himself to all who would believe His Gospel. Jesus said: "All things were delivered to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; **neither does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son personally chooses to reveal Him**" (Matt. 11:27). Indeed, Christ—the "I AM"—was the only one Who could reveal the Father, because Jesus was God manifested in the flesh.

Jesus Christ Was "the Prophet" Foretold by Moses: After Jesus' resurrection, the apostles understood that the Prophet about Whom Moses had prophesied was in fact Christ. The apostle Peter made this clear when he said: "For Moses truly said to the fathers, '**A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up to you from among your brethren, like me; Him shall you hear in all things that He shall say to you. And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people**'" (Acts 3:22-23).

John the Baptist was first to declare that Jesus had come from heaven with the words of God. "**He Who comes from heaven is above all; and what He has seen and heard, this is what He testifies.... [For] He Whom God has sent speaks the words of God...**" (John 3:31-34; also 5:19-30).

God fulfilled the prophecy He gave to Moses by manifesting Himself as a man, in order to speak to mankind. Thus, **the New Testament is the record of the words that God Himself would speak if He were to talk with us face-to-face.** Every human being is held accountable to Him because He has spoken to us through this record.

God becoming a *man*—to speak personally and intimately with His creation—was indeed a profound, beautiful and loving act. It was the greatest thing God could do. He did not speak to us as God, or through angels or prophets—but by His Son. "God, Who spoke to the fathers at different times in the past and in many ways by the prophets, has **spoken to us in these last days by His Son**, Whom He has appointed heir of all things, by Whom also He made the worlds..." (Heb. 1:1-2).

Jesus Christ Is the Way, the Truth and the Life: Contrary to the teachings of the world's religions, there are not "many ways" to God. There is only one way to God and to salvation, and that is through Jesus—Who declared: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

Christ is as far above all other so-called gods, philosophies and religions as the heavens are high above the earth. There is none equal to or greater than Jesus Christ, except God the Father. At the same time, no one can become Jesus' disciple unless drawn by the Father: "No one can come to Me unless the Father, Who sent Me, draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44).

The New Testament Is a Witness

Most decidedly, God did not leave the world without a true witness. In fact, the New Testament *is* His personal witness to all nations, to all religions—to every human being. Jesus said: "**And this gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come**" (Matt. 24:14). The Gospel would be **published** as well (Mark 13:10).

God could give no greater testimony to mankind than to come in the flesh to speak to His creation and show His love for them by dying for their sins. His testimony continued after His death and resurrection as the apostles preached and witnessed through the power of the Holy

Spirit. His testimony continues today for all generations through the inspired canon of the New Testament.

Witness Against the World's Religions and Their Leaders: After Jesus' resurrection, the majority of Jews rejected Him, refusing to believe that He was the Messiah. And while "Christian" groups typically "profess Jesus," they have ultimately rejected His teachings, substituting their own traditions in place of the clear teachings of the Word of God. Jesus castigated the leaders of Judaism because of such traditions: "Well did Isaiah prophesy concerning you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching *for* doctrine the commandments of men.' For leaving the commandment of God, you hold fast the tradition of men, *such as* the washing of pots and cups; and you practice many other things like *this*.... **Full well do you reject the commandment of God, so that you may observe your own tradition**" (Mark 7:6-9).

Thus, the words of Jesus Christ as preserved in the New Testament are not only a witness against Judaism, but against all other religions of the world—because they have all, in one way or another, rejected the teachings of Jesus Christ in order to observe their own "sacred" traditions and worship their own gods and idols.

John, in his Gospel, records Jesus Christ's witness to the leaders of Judaism: "**The one who is of God hears the words of God. For this reason you do not hear, because you are not of God**" (John 8:47). He later explained to the apostles the reason for His witness against the religious leaders of Judaism, and hence, all religions and their leaders: "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have had sin; **but now they have nothing to cover their sin**.... If I had not done among them the works that no other man has done, they would not have had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father" (John 15:22-24).

Witness to All People: The New Testament is not only a written witness to all nations and to all religions, but to every human being individually. John wrote: "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life.** For God sent not His Son into the world that He might judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. The one who believes in Him is not judged, but **the one who does not believe has already been judged because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God**" (John 3:16-18).

Indeed, Christ's words are a *witness*—a "standard"—against all who reject Him, and His words will judge them. "The one who rejects Me and does not receive My words has one who judges him; **the word which I have spoken, that shall judge him in the last day**" (John 12:48).

The New Testament—A Call to Repentance

Not only is the New Testament a witness to the world, the nations, the religious leaders and every individual, it is a call to repentance! Jesus Christ began His ministry by preaching repentance: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, *the* Son of God.... Now after the imprisonment of John, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time has been fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is near at hand; **repent, and believe in the gospel**'" (Mark 1:1, 14-15). Jesus made it clear that He came to call sinners to repentance: "I did not come to call *the* righteous [those who think they are righteous], but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:17; Luke 13:1-5).

What Is Sin? The New Testament defines sin as the transgression of the Law (I John 3:4). Anyone who habitually transgresses the commandments of God is living in a state of sin or lawlessness. A literal translation of this verse from the Greek reads: "**Everyone who practices sin is also practicing lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness.**"

In his Epistle to the Romans, the apostle Paul was moved to emphatically declare that all

have sinned—all have transgressed the laws and commandments of God, and all are sentenced to death. Escape and salvation are through Jesus Christ alone: “What then? Are we [Jews] of ourselves better [than the Gentiles]? Not at all! **For we have already charged both Jews and Gentiles—ALL—with being under sin.** Exactly as it is written: ‘**For there is not a righteous one—not even one!**’... **For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God**” (Rom. 3:9-10, 23).

On the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter was inspired to powerfully preach Christ and repentance of sin: “**Repent and be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you yourselves shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**” (Acts 2:38). Baptism by full immersion in water—which is symbolic of the burial of the old sinful self in a watery grave—must come after true and deep repentance.

The Meaning of Repentance: There are two, distinct kinds of repentance: a false, worldly “repentance” that is shallow, uncommitted and leads to death—or godly repentance that leads to forgiveness and salvation. Paul wrote, “For sorrow unto repentance before God works out salvation not to be repented of; **but the sorrow of the world works out death**” (II Cor. 7:10). Godly repentance results in a complete abhorrence and intolerance of one’s sins, a complete turning from sin—from the transgression of the laws and commandments of God. Repentance is a complete amendment of life, a turning away from one’s own sinful way to the way of love, faith and obedience; it means keeping the laws and commandments of God and living by every Word of God—through the grace of God.

For example, King David’s prayer of repentance after his affair with Bathsheba shows his complete abhorrence of sin and self as he cried out to God. “Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. **Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin, for I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.** Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done evil in Your sight.... Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Psa. 51:1-4, 9-10).

True, deep, godly repentance will produce a profound change in a person’s mind and attitude, which will result in a continuous desire to live by every Word of God. The truly repentant person will turn from evil thoughts and ungodly practices and will seek to conform his or her life to the will of God as revealed in the Holy Bible.

Salvation by Grace: After genuine repentance and acceptance of Christ as one’s personal Savior, the believer must be baptized by immersion in water for the remission of sins. Baptism symbolizes the death and burial of the believer—a spiritual conjoining into the death of Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:3). Once the believer has been justified by grace, he or she stands in a state of grace before God the Father. Paul makes this clear: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Whom **we also have access by faith into this grace in which we stand...**” (Rom. 5:1-2).

Salvation by grace does not confer “carte blanche” license to sin with impunity. Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep the commandments...” (John 14:15). Paul confirms that salvation by grace is demonstrated in works—not humanly devised traditions and works of religion—but the good works of keeping God’s commandments (Eph. 2:8-10).

The New Testament Confirms God’s Promise of Spiritual Seed to Abraham

When we fully understand the Word of God, it is clear that God, in His covenant with Abraham, promised the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. As the apostle Paul stated, Jesus

is the true Heir of the promises that God gave to Abraham: “**Now to Abraham and to his Seed were the promises spoken.** He does not say, ‘and to *your* seeds,’ as of many; but as of one, ‘and to your Seed,’ which is Christ” (Gal. 3:16).

Later, God promised Abraham innumerable offspring: “And He brought him outside and said, ‘**Look now toward the heavens and number the stars—if you are able to count them.**’ And He said to him, ‘**So shall your seed be.**’ And he believed in the LORD. And He accounted it to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:5-6). Ultimately, this promise refers to Abraham’s spiritual seed, who would receive the gift of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul made it quite clear that the Old Covenant with Abraham’s physical seed was temporary—but the blessings that are offered to the spiritual seed through the New Covenant are eternal. Under the New Covenant, individuals of every nation and race can inherit the promise of eternal life by becoming the children of Abraham through faith: “*It is exactly as it is written: ‘Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness.’* Because of this, *you should* understand that those who *are* of faith are **the true sons of Abraham**. . . . *It is* for this reason that those who are of faith are being blessed with the believing Abraham” (Gal. 3:6-7, 9).

The Promise of Eternal Life Through Jesus Christ: The prophet Daniel confirmed the promise of spiritual children who would inherit eternal life and shine like the stars of heaven: “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth [are dead in the graves] shall awake [in the resurrection of the righteous], some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they who are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they who turn many to righteousness **shall shine as the stars forever and ever**” (Dan. 12:2-3).

Jesus Christ was both the Seed of Abraham and the Son of God. In the same way, all those who believe in Him, have the begetting of the Holy Spirit, and live by His words are the spiritual seed of Abraham and the children of God. Paul wrote of this truth in his letter to the Galatians, declaring that “**if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise**” (Gal. 3:29). And like Jesus, those who are the sons of God, the seed of Abraham, will be resurrected to immortality—to inherit eternal life and live as glorified spirit beings in the Kingdom of God: “Now if *we are* children, **we are also heirs**—truly, heirs of God and **joint heirs with Christ**—if indeed we suffer together with Him, so that we may also **be glorified together with Him**” (Rom. 8:17). When the children of God are glorified, the words of Jesus Christ will be fulfilled: “**Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father**” (Matt. 13:43). Exactly as God promised Abraham, his seed will be an *innumerable multitude* that will shine like the stars (Gen. 15:5).

Instruction for Eternal Life

The New Testament was written as the ultimate witness of God’s incredible love for the human family and His wonderful plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. Yet, God holds each one of us accountable—for we alone must choose His way of life, the way that leads to eternal glory. Combined with the Old Testament, the New Testament, then, becomes our “Instruction Book” for eternal life!