

**NEW TESTAMENT SURVEY**

**LESSON SERIES**

**UNIT I - ORIENTATION**

**General Introduction  
The Inter-Testament Period  
The Testament and Old Testament  
New Testament Introduction**

for

**CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE  
CHRISTIAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY**

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## UNIT I - NEW TESTAMENT SURVEY ORIENTATION

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this New Testament course of study is to give the student a grounding in the New Testament Scriptures. This study course does not in the least pretend to be either a "commentary" or a symposium of theological papers. The study course is designed to be an exploratory opening-up of the New Testament to show how inviting and rewarding are its pages, and to provide briefly but, hopefully, amply general preparation for a more lengthy study of its parts.

This study course does not try to satisfy the whims of some who always want the "latest" in theology.

For example: It seems the intellectual fashion is to place the Gospel of Mark before the Gospel of Matthew, on the assumption that his Gospel is of an earlier date than those of Matthew and Luke, and was used by both as a main authority for their own Gospels

The arguments for the prior-Mark theory are unconvincing, especially in the face of the fact the Gospel of Matthew properly leads our four Gospels. Matthew links the New with the Old, Showing our Lord's fulfilling of the Hebrew Scriptures. He has more old Testament quotations and allusions than Mark and Luke together. Moreover, since Matthew, and he only, writes primarily for the Jews, his Gospel is the only one that adheres to the Bible principal "to the Jew first." Thus we keep the Gospel of Matthew first and reject the prior-Mark theory.

Nowadays "theology" is in danger of becoming mere religious speculation, not being properly anchored in a supernaturally inspired Bible.

This New Testament study course is based on the assumption that the Bible, Old and New Testament, is inspired and a complete revelation. That the sixty-six books are not simply a collection of writings. They are **ONE BOOK** - one in the progressiveness of the revelation which they collectively unfold, one in the harmony of the structure which they collectively constitute, one in the spiritual unity of the message which they collectively declare.

The Bible as a whole claims to be the Word of God; and its claim is substantiated both by the nature of its contents and the history of its influence.

Thus in this study course of the New Testament we approach the Bible as being in its totality **THE WORD OF GOD**; and in all our studying of it, we are seeking to learn, under the Holy Spirit, the mind and the and the will of God.

To this end the method of study which we will use in the course will be to study the New Testament books interpretively, that is, we shall seek to get hold of the controlling thought, the outstanding meaning and message of each book. Then look at it in relation to the other books of Scripture. Our aim, then, is to deal with each book or part in just such a way as will most effectively lay bare its special significance, and thus contribute most effectively toward a practical hold on the message of the Bible in its entirety.

Therefore, let us come to the Scriptures reverently, realizing that they are. in-breathed by the Holy Spirit, and "the Spirit of wisdom and unveiling" in the knowledge of God (Ephesians 1:18), must be our Teacher. Let our prayer through out this course of study be: "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Law" (Psalm 119:18). And let the dominating motive in all our study of God's Word be, in the words of Colossians 1:10, "that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Amen.

### **THE INTER-TESTAMENT PERIOD**

We would not say that a knowledge of the period between the Old and New Testaments is vital to one's understanding of the four Gospels, but it is very desirable, and indeed quite necessary if we would fully appreciate many of the scenes and incidents on which Matthew lifts the curtain. It gives a background against which we see with clearness the connections and relevance of the sayings and doing which occupy the earlier pages of our New Testament.

### **THE PERIOD IN GENERAL**

With the Old Testament canon closing with Malachi at about 397 B.C., we see that this period between Malachi and Matthew covers some four hundred years. This four hundred year interval has been called "the dark period" of Israel's history in pre-Christian times, because during it there was neither prophet nor inspired writer. With this period we seem to find the sad fulfillment of Psalm 74:9 upon Israel: "We see not our signs; there is no more any prophet; neither is there among us any that knoweth how long."

The condition of the Jews as a nation and race at the beginning of this four-hundred-year period should be kept in mind. Two hundred years earlier Jerusalem had been overthrown and the Jewish people carried into the Babylonian exile (606 B.C. - 586 B.C.) as punishment for their unfaithfulness to God. At the end of this 70 year punishment period, the Babylonian empire having been overthrown and succeeded by that of Media-Persia (536 B.C.), Cyrus, the Persian emperor, issued a decree permitting the return of the Jews to Israel. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, some fifth thousand Jews returned. Some twenty years after their return, after many setbacks, the building of the Temple was completed in 516 B.C. Then after another 58 years had past, in 458 B.C., Ezra the scribe returned to Jerusalem with a small group of Israelites and restored the Law and the ritual. Still another 13 years later, in 445 B.C., Nehemiah had come to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls and become governor. Now, once again, there was a Jewish state in Judea, though of course under Persian rule.

Such, then is the picture of the Jewish people at the beginning of

the four-hundred-year period between Malachi and Matthew: the Jewish Remnant back in Judea for about one hundred and forty years (536 B.C. - 397 B.C.); a small, dependent Jewish state there; Jerusalem and the temple rebuilt; The Law and the ritual restored; but with the mass of the people remaining dispersed through-out the Media-Persian empire.

**THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Now, if we are to appreciate this Jewish community as it re-emerges in the pages of the New Testament, we need look at their political development as well as their religious development. Viewed politically, the varying course of the Jewish nation in Palestine simple reflects the history of the different world-empires which ruled Palestine. The one exception to this was the Maccabean revolt, which resulted for a short period of time in there being an independent Jewish government.

Jewish history during those four centuries between the Testaments runs in six periods:

1. **the Persian,**
2. **the Greek,**
3. **the Egyptian,**
4. **the Syrian,**
5. **the Maccabean and**
6. **the Roman.**

**1. THE PERSIAN PERIOD (536 - 333 B.C.)**

The Persian rule over Palestine, which commenced with the decree of Cyrus in 536 B.C. for the return of the Jewish Remnant, continued until 333 B.C., when Palestine fell under the power of Alexander the Great (the third of the Gentile world-empires foretold by Daniel). This means that at the end of Malachi the Jews were still under Persian rule, and remained so for about the first sixty years of the inter-Testament period.

Persian rule seems to have been tolerant. The high priest form of Jewish government was respected with the high priest being given an increasing degree of civil power in addition to his religious offices, though of course he was responsible to the Persian governor of Syria.

**2. THE GREEK PERIOD (333 - 323 B.C.)**

Alexander the Great is a phenomenon in history. Catapulted into leadership through the assassination of his father when he, Alexander, was but twenty years of age, he transformed the face of the world, politically, in little more that a decade. He is the "notable horn" in the "he-goat" vision of Daniel (Daniel 8:1-7).

In his march on Jerusalem, he not only spared the city, but also offered sacrifice to Jehovah and had the prophecies of Daniel read to him concerning the overthrow of the Persian empire by a king of Grecia, (Daniel 8:21.) Thereafter he treated the Jews with respect and gave them full rights of citizenship with the Greeks in his new city, Alexandria, and in other cities. This in return, created decidedly pro-Greek sympathies among the Jews, and, along with Alexander's spreading of the Greek language and civilization, a Hellenistic spirit developed among the Jews which greatly affected their mental outlook afterward.

### **3. THE EGYPTIAN PERIOD (323 - 204 B.C.)**

This is the longest of the six periods of the inter-Testament period. The death of Alexander resulted in a period of time of confusion which was resolved by a four-fold break-up of Alexander's empire under four generals: Ptolemy, Lysimachus, Cassander and Selenus. These are the four "notable ones" which take the place of the "great horn," as predicted in Daniel 8:21,22.

After severe fighting, Judea, along with the rest of Syria fell to Ptolemy Soter, the first of the Greek kings to rule over Egypt. The beginning of the Ptolematic dynasty.

For a time Ptolemy Soter dealt harshly with the Jews, but afterwards became just as friendly. His successor, Ptolemy Philadelphus, continued this favorable attitude. His reign is notable in that the famous Septuagint translation of the Old Testament Scriptures was made from the Hebrew onto the Greek language. We see the importance of this when we realize that the Greek language had now become the language of the civilized world. The Jews were so numerous in Egypt and North Africa that such a translation had become a necessity. The Septuagint came into general use well before the birth of Jesus and was still in use during the time Jesus was on earth and was quoted by Jesus.

### **4. THE SYRIAN PERIOD (204 - 165 B.C.)**

When Ptolemy Philopater (fourth Ptolemy) died, his successor, Ptolemy Epiphanes, was only five years old. Antiochus the Great seized his opportunity and in 204 B.C. invaded Egypt. Judea, with other territories, soon after became annexed to Syria and so passed under the rule of the Seleucidae.

There are two points of special note about this period. First, it was at this time that Palestine was divided into the five sections which we find in the New Testament. (Sometimes the first three of these collectively are called Judea.) These different provinces are:

1. **Judea,**
2. **Samaria,**
3. **Galilee,**
4. **Perea,**
5. **Trachonitis.**

Secondly, this Syrian period was the most tragic part of the inter-Testament era for the Jews of Judea. Antiochus the Great was harsh toward the Jews. So was his successor. Yet the Jews in Judea were still permitted to live under their own laws, administered by the high priest and his council. But with the accession of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.) a "reign of terror" fell upon the Jews. In 170 B.C. Jerusalem was plundered, the wall torn down, the temple desecrated, temple sacrifices were abolished, the Holy of Holies was stripped of its costly furniture, Jewish religion was banned, a pig was sacrificed on the altar and the Temple at Jerusalem was rededicated to Jupiter Olympius with a statue of Jupiter Olympius erected on the altar and the people were subjected to monstrous cruelties.

**5. THE MACCABEAN PERIOD (165-63 B.C.)**

This excessiveness by Antiochus provoked the Jews to revolt and resist.

Judas, known as Judas (Hebrew word for hammer), gathered around him a large army of guerilla fighters and after several victories assumed the offensive. Jerusalem was captured, the temple refurnished, and on 25th December, the anniversary of its being polluted three years earlier, the orthodox sacrifices were reinstated (which date the Jews still observed as the Feast of the Dedication: see John 10:22). Judas Maccabeus, also captured the chief posts up and down the land.

Antiochus contemplated revenge against Judas, but a defeat in Persia, in addition to the successive defeats in Judea seemed to have brought upon him a superstitious dread which developed into a fatal sickness. He is said to have died in a state of raving madness.

What seems a deliverance, proved to be the deadliest crisis to come. Antiochus's son was very young. Lysias was the self-appointed Syrian regent. He now invades Judea with an army of 120,000 and defeats Judas and his army at Bethsura. Judas and his men retreat to Jerusalem which is placed under siege. But just when it seemed hopeless because of a rival regent at the Syrian capital, Lysias suddenly persuaded the young son of Antiochus to make peace with Judea - promising them the restoration of all their religious liberties. Thus the Maccabean revolt was crowned with success.

Further troubles arose later, however, from a new successor on the Syrian throne, Demetrius. During this period Judas Maccabeus was killed. In 143 B.C. Simon, the brother of Judas assumed leadership of the army. He was able to capture all other Syrian strongholds in Judea and forced the Syrian garrison in the citadel at Jerusalem to surrender.

Thus Judea was freed of all alien troops; and from that time (About 142 B.C.) was once again under independent Jewish government. Except for one short lapse, this continued until Judea became a Roman province, in 63 B.C.

**6. THE ROMAN PERIOD (63 B.C. onward)**

The Herod family now appears on the scene. Antipater, the father of the Herod who reigned at the time of our Lord's birth, managed to secure the support of Roman general Pompey to gain control of Judea. The result was a siege of Jerusalem which lasted three months with Pompey taking the city. Pompey with disregard for the Temple strolled into the Holy of Holies - an action which at once estranged all loyal Jewish hearts toward the Roman. That was 63 B.C.

Pompey's subjugation of Jerusalem ended the period of Judea's regained independence. Judea now became a province of the Roman empire. The high priest was completely deprived of any royal status, and retained priestly function only. The governing power was exercised by Antipater, who was appointed procurator of Judea by Julius Cesar in 47 B.C.

Antipater appointed Herod (his own son by marriage with Cypros, and Arabian women) as governor of Galilee, when Herod was only fifteen years old. In about 40 B.C., after appealing to Rome, Herod was appointed king of the Jews.

Herod seeking to ingratiate himself with the Jews married Marianne, the granddaughter of a former high priest, and by making her brother Aristobulus high priest. He also greatly increased the splendor of Jerusalem, building the elaborate temple which was the center of Jewish worship in the time of our Lord.

However, he was as cruel and sinister as he was able and ambitious. He stained his hands with many murders. He slew all three of his wife's brothers - Antigonus, Aristobulus and Hyrcanus. Later he murdered even his wife. Again, later, he murdered his mother-in-law. And still later he murdered his own sons by Marianne. This is that "Herod the Great" who was king when our Lord was born.

Such, then, in brief, is the political history of the Jews in Palestine during the four-hundred-year period between Malachi and Matthew. Now we shall review the period from a religious and spiritual viewpoint.

### **THE RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

You do not have to read far into the pages of the New Testament until you realize that some great changes have come upon the Jews and the Jewish nation in Judea, since the last writer of the Old Testament laid down his pen. It is not simply that Palestine has changed hands half a dozen times. **There are new sects or parties:**

1. **Pharisees,**
2. **Sadducees,**
3. **Herodians.**

#### **There are new institutions:**

1. **Synagogue,**
2. **Scribes,**
3. **Sanhedrin.**

These changes - the rise of these new sects and institutions, and the evolutions of Judaism (the evolving of the people and their religion around the Old Testament Scriptures into one and the same- one implying the other) have come about during those four hundred years between the Old Testament and the New. This in itself shows the importance attached to the inter-Testament period. Let us now briefly look at these religious developments.

To begin with, if we are to understand in general the spirit and trend of the Jewish community during that stretch of centuries we must appreciate the profound impact made upon the nation by the Babylonian exile. The Jews went into that exile with what seemed a hopelessly incurable infatuation for idolatry; they emerged from it and have remained so to this day the most monotheistic people in the world with their belief in the one true God.

It is an extraordinary fact, that after the Babylonian exile the Jewish people are totally and for ever converted from idolatry into convinced worshippers of the one true God.

What happened to bring about this change? The Babylonian exile startled them into the realization that the gods of the heathen were lying vanities, and that Jehovah was the one true God, the Creator of all things, the sovereign Ruler of the universe, whose will alone is sovereign over the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. With realization they were once and forever cured of idolatry and thus they became confirmed worshippers of their covenant God Jehovah.

Now this system of Jewish religion which originated just after the Exile and developed during the inter-Testament period was founded on a new zeal for the Law (the sacred Scriptures) and the Messianic hope which came forth from those Scriptures - the hope concerning the coming Messiah who should permanently re-gather and exalt the chosen people, and under whose glorious reign all the promised blessings of the covenant made with Abraham would burst forth into fulfillment.

### **SYNAGOGUE**

The Law now became the standard of holiness and the symbol of nationality. Thus the rise of the local synagogue. For here the Scriptures were read and expounded by the scribes.

The basic idea of the synagogue was instruction in the Scriptures, not worship, even though an elaborate liturgical service developed later, with public prayers read by appointed persons, and responses made by the congregation. Also, since the public reading of the Law had now to be by translation into the Aramaic tongue which the people learned in Babylonia (see Neh. 8:8, where such translation is implied), the transition from translation to exposition and even to discourses was easy, though no doubt it took place gradually.

That such synagogue discourses were common in our Lord's time is seen in such references as Matthew 4:23, 9:35; Luke 4:15, 44; Acts 5:15, 14:1, 17:10, 18:19.

However, from that time, also, there began to form that elaborate system of interpretations, amplifications and additional regulations of which the Judaism of our Lord's time was the result.

### **SCRIBES**

Who and what were the "scribes" the none-too-attractive figures who appear so frequently in the Gospel narratives? We read of scribes away back in Old Testament times, but they must be distinguished from that further order of scribes which developed during the inter-Testament period and had acquired such important status in our Lord's time.

It is not difficult to see how, when once this new order of scribes came in, it rapidly gained great power. The very nature of this new Judaism was to make every Jew personally responsible for the keeping of the whole Law. Therefore, "a definite rule" had somehow to be extracted from the Law to cover practically every activity of daily life. This endeavor to make the Law such a detailed code created a complex and sometimes acute problem. To accomplish this, there had to be a body of trained experts, who made the study of the Law the great business of their lives.

Thus the scribes who we meet in the Gospel narratives were a class of professional experts in the interpretation and application of the Law and the other Old Testament Scriptures. In the Greek of the New Testament their usual title is the plural, *grammateis*, translated as "scribes." Less frequently they are called "lawyers", *nomikoi*, as in Luke 7:30

It is with Ezra that the office of the scribe reaches a new dignity. In Nehemiah 8:1-8 we see Ezra elevated in a pulpit, reading and expounding and applying the Law and with Levite assistants, "causing the people to understand the Law."

### **PHARISEES**

The Pharisees must be distinguished from the scribes. Again and again in the Gospel narratives they are mentioned in conjunction with the scribes (Matthew 5:20, 12:38, 15:1, 23:2, Mark 2:16, Luke 5:21,30, etc.), but although this reveals closeness of affinity it does not imply oneness of identity. The Pharisees were an ecclesiastical party, held together by their peculiar aims and views, whereas the scribes were a body of experts in a scholastic sense. Certainly a man might be both a Pharisee and a scribe; and the fact is, that practically all the scribes were Pharisees in out look and association; yet the two fraternities were different from each other.

It was inevitable that the Pharisees should have much in common with the scribes, those specialist in the Written Law, and in the ever enlarging Oral Law (**The Oral Law was that complex code of application of the Written Law to every area of one's life and activities**). Indeed, as mentioned earlier, most of those who were scribes by vocation would be Pharisees in conviction.

The origin of the Pharisees as a movement may be compared to a river which flows underground for some distance before coming to the surface and flowing visibly onwards. The spirit and attitudes of the Pharisees were present in post-exile Judaism long before the sect took its historical form under the name "Pharisees."

We see the spirit of Phariseeism in the aim of Ezra and leaders of the Jewish remnant as expressed in Nehemiah 10:28,29. It is a spirit of "separatism" from all others to Jehovah through a strict observance of His Law. By common consent all mixed marriages were dissolved, and other irregularities corrected. In a mass meeting, and by signed covenant, the book of the Law was acclaimed as the binding standard for both state and individual. Separation to Jehovah was the controlling Idea. Separatism based on the Law (Written and Oral) was the ideology of the Pharisees.

The thing, however, that eventually crystallized them into a clique or sect was a body of Jews, primarily made up of the priests, whose goal and interest was the worldly aspects of religion and politics. These two groups provoked each other into existence. Thus we have the Pharisees on one side and the Sadducees on the other.

The Pharisees as a body were influential way beyond their numbers. According to Josephus the number of Pharisees in Herod's time was only about 6,000. Yet, despite their small number, they had in fact such a hold on the popular mind that no governing power could afford to disregard them. We need only read the four Gospels to see what

sway they had in our Lord's days on earth - and what influence they had in bringing about His crucifixion.

The mark of the Pharisee - the ritualist - is that he is always ADDING TO- He is not content with the written Word of God, and with the plain truth of the Gospel. He must start adding his own ideas and ordinances, until religion and salvation are a highly complicated matter. This is just what the Pharisees did, until, with the weight of their accumulated religious ceremonies and observances, they made religion a burden too heavy for men to bear.

### **THE SADDUCEES**

The Sadducees seem to have been in the first instance neither a religious sect nor a political party, but a social clique. Numerically they were a much smaller body than the Pharisees, and belonged for the most part to the wealthy and influential priestly families who were the aristocrats of the Jewish nation.

The leaders of the party were the elders with seats in the council, the military officers, the statesmen, and officials who took part in the management of public affairs. With the mass of the people they never had much influence; like true aristocrats, they did not greatly care for it.

Their one ambition was to make themselves indispensable to the reigning prince, that they might conduct the government of the country according to their own views. The Sadducees held, like most modern politicians, that the law of God had no application to politics. If Israel was to be made great and prosperous it must be by well-filled treasuries, strong armies, skillful diplomacy, and all the resources of human abilities. To expect a Divine deliverance merely by making the people holy, they accounted as sheer and dangerous fatalism.

As a body they rejected totally the Oral Law accumulated by the scribes and held to by the Pharisees, and professed to stand by the Written Law alone; though, even their stand on the Written Law alone was done so with great skepticism. Matthew 22:23 and Acts 23:8 show how skeptical was their attitude to the Written Law, for we are told that they denied the bodily resurrection, and did not believe either in angels or spirits.

Thus, we can understand how intolerable to such a group were the teaching of Jesus and His Messianic claims. Their hatred is measured by their readiness to consort even with the detested Pharisees in order to kill Him. It was they, in fact, who were directly responsible for His crucifixion (compare Luke 3:2; John 11:49, 18:13,14,24, 19:15; Mark 15:11).

The mark of the Sadducee - the rationalist - is that he is always TAKING FROM. He cannot accept the written Word of God in its entirety, nor the truth of the Gospel as it stands without drastic deletions. Everything must be tried at the bar of human reason. This, that, and the other thing must be cut out to make faith reasonable and tenable. This was precisely the attitude of the Sadducee. He could not or rather would not, believe either in angels or demons, either in the resurrection of the dead or in any other miracle.

### **THE HERODIANS**

In Matthew 22:16, Mark 3:6 and 12:13 we find yet another Jewish clique, namely, the Herodians. Who were they? There is no explicit information as to their original banding together, but their very name, of course, speaks of the role. Whatever the religious preferences of its members may have been, the group as such was in no sense a religious cult or union. This is a political group and the leading aim of its members was to further the cause of the Herod government. Whether they were directly connected to the Herod household or throne is mere conjecture, but obviously the ready seal of royal approval would be theirs.

We can well imagine that many would consider it sound policy to strengthen the hold of the Herod house on Jewish leaders and public. What could be wiser than to back the Herodian throne, which enjoyed the favor of Rome, and thus giving Judea the protection of that mighty empire? Many would see in the Herods the one Jewish hope of separate national continuance; the one alternative to direct heathen rule. Others would be inclined to favor a blend of the ancient faith and Roman culture such as the first Herod and his successors had sought to effect as the highest consummation of Jewish hopes.

This group was hated by the Pharisees. The two parties were bitterly intolerant of each other, which makes the consorting of the Pharisees with the Herodians against our Lord all the more astonishing.

The mark of the Herodian - the secularist - he cared neither for adding to nor taking away from. Like the careless Gallio, he "cared for none of these things." The written Word of God, the message of the Gospel were far from his first concern. His prime consideration was the life that now is. What does it matter that a heathen Herod reigns on a throne made crimson with crime so long as material interests are furthered? While the ritualist Pharisee was busy adding to, and the rationalist Sadducee was skeptically taking away from, the secularist Herodian was heedlessly passing by.

### **THE SANHEDRIN**

There is one further Jewish institution which had its beginning during the inter-Testament period, which plays a big role in the Four Gospels: that is the Sanhedrin, quite often translated as "council". The Sanhedrin was the supreme civil and religious tribunal of the Jewish nation. The supreme judicial and administrative council of the Jewish people. With that representative body must lie forever the real responsibility for the crucifying of Israel's Messiah, the incarnate Son of God.

**The Sanhedrin consisted of seventy-one members, made up, so it would seem, of:**

1. The high priest;
2. Twenty-four "chief priests" who represented all twenty-four orders of the whole priesthood (I Chronicles 24:4,6);
3. Twenty-four "elders," who represented the laity, often called "elders of the people," as in Matthew 21:23, 24:3; Acts 4:8 - reminding us of Revelation 4:4; T

4. Twenty-two "scribes," who were the expert interpreters of the law in matters both religious and civil.

When the word Sanhedrin is used, as in Mark 14:55, it denotes this fourfold assembly; and vice versa, where "chief priests and elders and scribes" are mentioned together, as in Matthew 16:21 it is referring to the Sanhedrin. An alternate name for the elders is "rulers." In some places we find just "chief priests and rulers" (Luke 23:13 or simply "rulers" (Acts 3:17)."

Our Lord presumably had in mind the president and seventy senators of the Sanhedrin when He chose His seventy representatives and co-workers, as recorded in Luke 10., just as He had the twelve tribes of Israel in mind when He appointed the twelve apostles. His choice of those seventy was prophetic perhaps, among other significances, that the authority of that old-time Jewish court was indeed now passing away in favor of a new "seventy" under His own presidency.

### **THE COMMON PEOPLE**

There is, yet, one very important aspect of the old-time Judaism which we must not on any account overlook. It is not only courts and schools and leaders and parties which compose a nation, but those thousands and thousands of individuals who are only known anonymously and collectively as "the common people."

These common people, far removed from the pomp of earthly courts and the strife of factions and the heated atmosphere of political and religious fanaticism were waiting for the consolation of Israel. And now at last as we enter into the New testament times, to such as these, the long expected Messiah had been revealed. In the hour of Israel's deepest degradation, when Herod's kingdom seemed to mock the aspirations of all faithful Israelites with its counterfeit resemblance of Messianic glory, their eyes beheld the Lord's Anointed, the true King of the kingdom of God, the Ruler, whose goings forth were from of old, from everlasting.

### **THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE OLD TESTAMENT**

We need to bear in mind from the outset of this New Testament Survey study that dominating all the writings of the New Testament the characteristic concept is that of FULFILLMENT.

- **Matthew**, right at the beginning, sets the key-note, and for emphasis strikes the key-note twelve times over with his "That it might be "FULFILLED" (1:22, 2:15, 17, 23, 4:14, 5:17, 12:17, 13:35, 21:4, 24:56, 27:9, 35). The very first recorded words of our Lord as He commenced His public ministry, according to Matthew 3:15 was this: "Thus it becometh us to FULFILL."
- According to **Mark** it was: "The time is "FULFILLED, the kingdom of God is at hand" (1:15).
- According to **Luke** it was "This day is the scripture FULFILLED in your ears" (4:21).

- **John** instead of giving us our Lord's own first declaration, gives us the reaction of those who first "received" Him - "We have FOUND!" (1:41,45). And thereafter, seven times over, he reiterates Matthew's key-note: "That it might be fulfilled" (12:38, 13:18, 15:25, 17:12, 19:24,28,36).
- So it is, in varying form and phrase, all through the Acts and Epistles.

**The New Testament is the Answer to the Old.** Without it the Old is like a river which loses itself in the sands. It is revelation without destination; something pre-visualised but never post-realized; promise without fulfillment; preparation without consummation. If the New Testament is not the answer to the Old, then the Old has never had an answer, and never can have an answer. But the New Testament IS the answer. It is THE answer. It is the TRUE, CLEAR, GLORIOUS FULFILLMENT. The Old and New Testament make up a completed Symphony, a beautiful Masterpiece.

The Jesus of the New Testament is the fulfillment of Old Testament ceremony, history, philosophy and prophecy. In the Old Testament He is coming. In the Gospels He has come in visible humanity. In the Epistles He has come In by the invisible Holy Spirit. In the Apocalypse He comes back in the glory of world empire. The fulfillment at His first coming prove that Old Testament prophecy is Divine; and they equally guarantee that the still unfulfilled prophecies in both the Old and New Testaments, will just as surely take place in God's time.

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT**

The New Testament is the most vital book in the world. Its supreme subject is the Lord Jesus Christ. Its supreme object is the salvation of human beings. Its supreme project is the ultimate reign of the Lord Jesus in a boundless and endless empire.

### **STRUCTURE**

Structurally the New Testament is built together in the form of a literary ARCHWAY. When you pause and reflect on it, there is no other kind of edifice which so accurately expresses the spiritual function and significance of the New Testament as an archway. These twenty-seven documents which comprise the New Testament, in the total union are God's wonderful constructed archway into saving truth, into the true knowledge of Himself, into eternal blessedness.

**First the four Gospels and the Acts lay down a solid five-fold slab, of five steps, of historic fact beneath our feet. Then rising up on the right hand and on the left are two nine-fold groups of epistles**

- the "Christian Church Epistles," and the "General or Hebrew Christian Epistles," both being bridged above by the four "Pastoral and Personal Epistles," the whole thus framing itself into the likeness of an archway, and reaching its height in the transcendent Gospel Truth "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (I Timothy 3:16).

Viewing the New Testament as an archway with these particular groupings shows us that the New Testament is far from being just a string of writings succeeding each other with little or no reference to order. These are designed divisions and groupings, a supernatural supervised over-all pattern, and a significant. arch-way structure.

### **DEVELOPMENT**

As we view the New Testament in its over-all pattern of set group arrangement of the twenty-seven parts we notice an observable unfolding movement. This movement has been aptly called "progress of doctrine." Thus besides design there is development. Besides pattern there is progress.

This "**progress of doctrine**" shows itself in the order given to the four Gospels. Matthew is necessarily first for it links up the Gospel with the Hebrew Scriptures, thus introducing the New Testament as the fulfillment of the old. "**That it might be fulfilled which was spoken,**" is its distinguishing refrain; and its narrative is plainly adapted to the Jews, of whom, as to the flesh Christ came.

Just as plainly Mark fits next, and Luke next again. In Mark we see movement away from the close connection with Jewish life and thought which the first Gospel is studious to exhibit. There is no genealogy of our Lord's Davidic and Abrahamic descent. Only twice (as against twelve in Matthew) do we find "that it might be fulfilled." Our Lord is seen not so much fulfilling the past as commanding the present. He is the wonder-Worker with power over both visible and invisible realms. This is a Gospel of action, and its first intended approach seems to be the Roman rather than the Hebrew. The Gospel of Mark may well be summarized in Peter's words to the Roman converts in Acts 10:

**"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all those who were oppressed of the devil."**

Though in Mark we see a moving away from the more exclusive Hebrew features of Matthew, it is in Luke that we see Jesus, in the broadest sense presented as "the Son of Man" for all humanity. The very preface prepares us for this. The other evangelist, according to Hebrew form, begin without a dedication, whereas Luke not only prefaces a dedication in Greek fashion and classic style but dedicates his Gospel to a Gentile convert. Thereafter the narrative brings out the common humanity of the perfect Man with all the human family and without regard to national distinctions or the older demarcation between Jew and Gentile.

This outward "progress" from Matthew through Mark to Luke corresponds with the racial identification of the three writers. Matthew was a Jew, a near kinsman of our Lord. Mark, or "John Marcus" (Acts 12:12), was half Jew and half Gentile (John, Hebrew - Marcus, his surname, Greek). Luke, or Lucus, was a Gentile.

Again, this outward "progress" of the Gospel, from Jewish Matthew, through Jew-Gentile Mark, to Gentile Luke, parallels with the three stages of movement in the Acts of the Apostles. First the Gospel is preached within the confines of the Jews (Acts 1-7). Then it spreads through Samaria, reaches to the Ethiopian Chancellor, and breaks forth with Pentecostal gusto on the Gentile (Roman) household of Cornelius (8-12). Finally, through

the missionary travels of Paul, it is preached freely and fully to the whole Gentile world (13-28).

But if, in our three synoptic Gospels, the presentation of the historical Christ shows these progressive stages, from its originating Jewish aspect to its most universal adaptation, the fourth Gospel is its perfect climax. That which has been rightly inferred from the reports of the three is now plainly declared in the review by the fourth: the historical Jesus is the eternal Son. He who is Israel's Messiah is Himself Jehovah. He who is the world's Savior is the world's Maker. He not only teaches truth: He is the truth. He imparts life because He is the life.

The "progress," movement, in the Acts has already been noted. It follows the predetermined course laid out by our Lord in Acts 1:8, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and you shall be witnesses unto Me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of earth."

As the narrative of Acts opens, Jesus crucified, risen, ascended, is Israel's Messiah; but more and more as the story unfolds He is the world's Savior. All over the earlier pages we find "to the Jew first"; but more and more legibly, as the later pages are turned, we find "and also to the Gentile."

The Messianic kingdom has now been twice offered and twice rejected. In the Gospel it was offered through the lips of Christ Himself, but Israel rejected it and nailed Him to the Cross. Now, in the Acts, it is offered again by the crucified, risen, ascended Jesus, through messengers who are Spirit-filled, and Israel rejects it again as seen in the martyring of Stephen.

Although Israel has now rejected Jesus and the offered kingdom, there are groups of men and women, both Jews and Gentiles, in Judea and Samaria and throughout the Roman world, who have believed on Him and received Him as their Lord and Savior. Out of these groups we see the formation of the ecclesia, the local Church. This ecclesia which is developing here on earth is bringing to light a hidden purpose of God. That is the point where the book of the Acts leaves us and where we are ready to see the "the progress of doctrine" in the Epistles.

There are three words which summarize for us the Christian walk. They are "faith" and "hope" and "love." As I Corinthians 13:13 puts it: "And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three: but the greatest of these is love."

Now the three principal writers of our New Testament epistles are Paul, Peter and John, and they come in that order. They all speak about faith, hope and love, yet each of them has an emphasis. First comes Paul, who is distinctively the apostle of faith. Next comes Peter, the apostle of hope. Last comes John, the apostle of love. The arrangement is designed to indicate the true order of spiritual progress.

From beginning to end the New Testament is a sustained movement of progress until the thorn crowned Christ of the Cross is the glory-crowned King of the new Jerusalem.  
AMEN.

**END of Lesson**

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**Reference from:**

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