



THE BIBLE: GOD'S AMAZING BOOK • SESSION 4

God Speaking in the New Testament



The Old Testament teaches us about God's character—His power, compassion, holiness, and justice. The New Testament tells us that Jesus is the ultimate demonstration of who God is—He is the “exact imprint” of God's nature (Hebrews 1:3).

Like the Old Testament, the New Testament has different kinds of writing. The first four books, referred to as *the Gospels* tell us all about Jesus. The book of Acts reveals the early church's history. The letters from the church leaders, Romans through Jude, describe how to live as Jesus's followers. The last book, Revelation, describes Jesus's final triumph when He returns.

DAY 1—THE GOSPELS

1. The word *gospel* means “good news.” The New Testament's first four books—Matthew, Mark,

Luke and John—each tell the good news of Jesus. They give us a different perspective on His life. Read Luke 7:36-50. Think about the different characters in this story: Jesus, the woman, and the dinner host. What strikes you about each one?

DAY 2—WHY WE NEED THE GOSPELS

- 2. The Gospels not only tell about what Jesus did; they also help us understand why He came and how to follow Him. Read Matthew 11:28-30; Mark 8:34-37; and John 11:25-26. What insights do you receive about why Jesus came and what it means to be His follower?

DAY 3—HISTORY

- 3. The book of Acts gives us the first-century church's history. From its beginning, through its spread across Israel, to its growth in other countries, it's an action-packed story. Read Acts 4:32-35. List everything you notice in this passage about the early church in Jerusalem.

- 4. What do you think it would be like to belong to that kind of community?

- 5. *There were good and bad times in the church's early years. Read the following verses and write your observations.

Miracles—Acts 3:1-10

People Problems—Acts 6:1-4

Death—Acts 7:54-60

Travel—Acts 14:21-28

Riots—Acts 19:23-34

Growth—Acts 2:46-47; 17:12; 18:8; 19:10

DAY 4—LETTERS

- 6. The New Testament contains letters that teach Christians how to live as Jesus's disciples.

Read Colossians 3:1-17. Learning to live this way takes a lifetime, but the Holy Spirit helps us.

What do you see in this passage that you would like Jesus to grow in your life?

Read Galatians 5:22-23. What does God's Spirit produce in Christ followers?

DAY 5—VICTORY AT LAST

- 7. Revelation contains word pictures and descriptions that are hard to understand. But it's clear that Jesus will return and all that's wrong will be made right. Read Revelation 21:3-5. As you think about these promises, what would you like to see be made "new"?

*Questions marked with a * are optional, but they're really great questions. If at all possible, please take the time to go deeper and experience richer engagement with God in His Word.

Reading the New Testament is like unwrapping a much-anticipated gift. Whereas the Old Testament tells what went wrong with humankind and points toward God's coming solution, the New Testament reveals God's answer—and His name is *Jesus*.



The New Testament consists of 27 books, all written in the first century. They contain different kinds of writings and cover many topics, but their main purpose is to reveal who Jesus is and what it means to know and follow Him. The New Testament invites us into its world so that we can, with open hearts and minds, hear what God has to say about His beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

Four Books—One Amazing Subject!

The Gospels are among the most significant works of literature the world has seen. In different ways, all four introduce us to Jesus Christ, the most influential figure in history. The story of His life, death, and resurrection contained in these books has had a profound impact on every society that has been introduced to it. Millions of people's lives have changed as they encountered Jesus through these books' pages.

The Gospels reveal Jesus Christ—the Son of God, the Son of Man, God unveiled, and humanity as it was meant to be. All four tell the same basic story, yet there are differences. The first, Matthew, was written from a Jewish perspective, drawing heavily on the Old Testament. The second, Mark, gives a short, fast-paced summary of Jesus's life. Luke was written with a Gentile audience in view. And more than the other Gospels, it shows Jesus's compassion to women, foreigners, and others on the fringe of first-century society. Written by one of Jesus's best friends decades after the other three Gospels, John's Gospel provides an intimate and reflective account of Jesus's life and its meaning.

Acts—The Birth of the Church

The New Testament's fifth book describes the Holy Spirit's coming and the Christian church's birth on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2). A few weeks after Jesus had ascended to heaven, it came time to celebrate the Jewish festival of Pentecost. Jewish people from all over the known world—Africa, Asia, and Europe—had come to Jerusalem on a pilgrimage. And as a group of 120 of Jesus's friends gathered for worship, the Holy Spirit descended from heaven and filled them with His power. Many who witnessed this astonishing event put their faith in Jesus Christ. As a result, Jesus's message spread around the world.

New Testament Letters —The Maturing of the Church

The good news about Jesus Christ traveled very quickly across the Roman Empire, attracting converts wherever it was spread. These new Christ followers gathered in small groups, which typically met in each other's homes. Sometimes these new converts mixed Christianity with pagan worldviews and developed heretical beliefs. This has been a problem for the church ever since.

Because these young churches needed guidance and fortifying, the apostles wrote letters. Most

CBS was the first time I remember owning my faith.

—Caitlyn, a teenage CBS participant

of the New Testament's 21 letters were written to congregations and were meant to be read aloud in their entirety when received. These letters brought encouragement, instruction, and sometimes correction to the new believers. They offered clear Christian doctrine peppered with advice on how to deal with practical issues of church life.

Much of what's written in these letters is relevant to us today. Even where we have difficulties that the early church did not encounter, we can take principles from these books that can form the basis to solutions. And since many ancient heresies are still circulating today in some form, these letters can help prevent today's church from going astray.

These letters encourage us on how to follow Jesus's teaching. Being a Christian is never easy. Like now, many people who originally received these letters were living under hardship. The letters teach us how to live well with others. And they let us know

that it's possible to be thankful, prayerful, and worshipful no matter what's going on in our lives.

Revelation—Christ's Final Victory

The Bible's last book is a letter written by the apostle John to be circulated around the churches in Asia Minor (which is roughly present-day Turkey). It begins with individual instructions and challenges to these churches. Then it details the vision of things to come that Jesus had given to John.

Revelation is difficult to understand in one way because it's impossible to interpret all the details with certainty. On the other hand, Revelation is very simple: its message is the guarantee of Christ's final victory. Revelation's first readers were often subject to cruel persecution because of their faith. They sorely needed this encouragement. Two thousand years have passed, and we still need that same assurance. The Bible may be complete, but God's plan is still unfolding. One day good will finally triumph!