Summary of the New Testament Books

Gospels

Matthew
Date written – 60s
Author – Matthew
Summary – All four gospels tell about the life of Jesus from the time before his birth to the time after his death and resurrection. Yet each Gospel has a distinct emphasis. It is like hearing the same story from four different points of view. Each writer is remembering and focusing on different aspects of who Jesus is and what he came to do.
Matthew’s emphasis – Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophesy. Matthew also emphasizes Jesus as King as prophesied Messiah and descendent from David’s throne.

Mark
Date written – 50s
Author – Mark
Summary – Mark is about who Jesus is. At first Jesus is more secretive about who he is because he doesn’t want to fulfill the wrongly directed hopes of who the Messiah was supposed to be and what he was supposed to do. In the first half of Mark (1-8) It is not uncommon in Mark for Jesus to tell people to keep who he is a secret. Once Peter confesses Christ in Mark 8 Jesus speaks much more freely about who he is and what he came to do. Like Matthew, Mark ends with Jesus commissioning his disciples to spread the Gospel all over the world.
Mark’s emphasis – Jesus as Redeemer

Luke
Date written – 60s
Author – Luke
Summary – Luke and Acts are both written by Luke and tell the story of Christianity from the birth of Jesus through the growth of the early church. There are many teachings and miracles in Luke that points us right to the heart of God and just how compassionate he is toward mankind.
Luke’s emphasis – Jesus as compassionate and up lifter of the oppressed

John
Date written – 80s
Author – John
Summary – The Gospel of John tells the story of the life and ministry of Jesus through an insider point of view. Matthew was a disciple of Jesus but not in his “inner circle” like Peter, James and John were. Luke
and John were not part of Jesus’ 12 disciples. So John holds a special place in teaching us about God and Christ as an “insider.” One thing you will notice in John are a lot of double meanings that often leave people confused (being born again is one example from John 3). Like the other three Gospels, John shows Jesus on his way to a cross. Like the other Gospels Jesus defeats death through his resurrection and shows us that there is hope beyond the grave.

John’s emphasis – Jesus as the Son of God and his unique relationship with His Father.

History

Acts of the Apostles

Date written – 62
Author – Luke
Summary – Luke wrote the book of Acts to tell the rest of the story. Acts covers the first thirty years of the church and tells how the Gospel went from being believed by just a few disciples waiting in Jerusalem to the Holy Spirit inspiring them to convert thousands and take the message all over the world. In the book of Acts we see missionaries including Paul, Barnabas, Mark and Luke (who both wrote the Gospels) travelling around the world, spreading the message of Christ to Jews and Gentiles. They travel to many of the cities Paul later writes the letters that follow.

One major dividing line in the book is Acts 10 where God allows the message of Christ to be preached to the Gentiles for the first time. This had been God’s plan all the way back to Abraham when he promised Abraham he would be the “father of many nations” (Genesis 17:5).

Paul’s Letters

Romans

Date written – 55
Author – Paul
Summary – Romans was written to a racially divided church. The Jew and Gentile Christians were struggling to find unity. Paul writes Romans to reconcile their relationships and to understand that the message of Christ should act as a common bond across all nations just as God planned for it to do from the beginning.

1 Corinthians

Date written – 54
Author – Paul
Summary – Corinth is a town in Greece where Paul visited in Acts 18. The Corinthian church was also very divided (1:10-17). Paul sets them straight by talking about how true leaders should bring unity and not division but that ultimately our leader is Christ and not any earthly leaders. Paul also deals with many
of their specific concerns as a congregation including marriage (chapter 7), the eating of food sacrificed to idols (chapters 8-11) and issues in worship (chapters 11-14).

2 Corinthians
Date written – 55
Author – Paul
Summary – 2 Corinthians seems to be about Paul’s defense of his ministry to those hostile toward him at Corinth. He upholds his integrity and commission from God and defends many of his travel plans in this letter.

Galatians
Date written – 48
Author – Paul
Summary – Galatians was written to address a specific concern among the Christians in the region of Galatia. It seems those who were Jewish Christians were beginning to enforce various aspects of Judaism (circumcision for one) on the Gentile Christians. Paul writes this letter to assure them of the sufficiency of Christ apart from the Law of Moses (Genesis-Deuteronomy) and to help mend the broken relationships left behind between the Christians in the Galatian churches.

Ephesians
Date written – 60
Author – Paul
Summary – One of four letters Paul wrote from prison. Normally Paul’s letters have a specific occasion that prompted him to write these churches. Ephesians is the hardest to pin down. What stands out in Ephesians is the connection between knowing God and what he has done for us (Chapters 1-3) and the resulting actions that should be in our lives in response to all God has done for us (Chapters 4-6).

Philippians
Date written – 61
Author – Paul
Summary – Paul invites the Philippian Christians to live their lives for Christ even if it includes suffering (Phil 1). He encourages them to imitate Christ’s humility (Phil 2) and to keep in mind the importance of Christ (Phil 3). Even though in jail, Paul has found contentment (Phil 4:11-12).

Colossians
Date written – 60
Author – Paul
Summary – One of four letters Paul wrote from prison. Colossians was written to help combat some false teachings that were taking place in the house churches of Colossae. It seems some believed that it was
necessary to appease angels by doing certain religious ceremonies in order to gain entrance to the presence of God (see especially Col 2). Paul assures them, as he did the Galatians, that we don't need anything more than Jesus Christ to be in the proper relationship with God.

**1 Thessalonians**

Date written – 50  
Author – Paul  
Summary – 1 Thessalonians may have been written to Christians in Thessalonica who struggled with understanding the second coming of Christ and what that meant for Christians who died before his return. Some believed in the early church that Christ would come back within a generation due to some of Jesus’ teachings (like John 21:22). Paul encourages them toward purity, love and responsibility.

**2 Thessalonians**

Date written – 51  
Author – Paul  
Summary – Paul wrote this letter to alleviate even more concerns they had about the return of Christ. It seems some had taught Christ has already come back (2 Thess 2:1-2) and that there were false teachers in their midst (2:3-15). Paul writes this letter to inform and encourage them toward faithfulness so that they will not be led away from God through false teaching.

**1 Timothy**

Date written – 62  
Author – Paul  
Summary – 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus are called the “Pastoral epistles”. They were written by Paul to help equip these men of God toward a more productive ministry. They were also written to help these ministers of the Gospel (Timothy and Titus) to effectively lead in the congregations they were a part of. These three letters are very practical covering everything from how to dress to qualifications of elders and deacons and how to treat others in the church.

**2 Timothy**

Date written – 63  
Author – Paul  
Summary – Written as Paul nears the end of his life in Roman prison. He writes this to ensure the faithfulness of Timothy and to encourage him to finish strong just as Paul is doing himself. The most famous verse in this book is found in 2 Timothy 3:14-17 where Paul encourages him to study the scriptures and explains the extent of their usefulness.
**Titus**

Date written – 62  
Author – Paul  
Summary – The last of Paul’s pastoral letters, this letter is written to give instruction to Titus on how Christians are to live and what should be taught to those in the church. Another very practical letter.

**Philemon**

Date written – 60  
Author – Paul  
Summary – One of four letters Paul wrote from prison. This letter was written to reconcile the relationship between a slave and a slave master who were both Christians in the church in Colossae. The slave, Onesimus, came to Paul so he could help him make things right again with his master, Philemon. Paul put the pressure on Philemon to make things right, even if it wasn’t easy.

**General Letters**

**Hebrews**

Date written – between 60 & 70  
Author – Unknown  
Summary – Hebrews reads more like a sermon than a letter and that may have been how the book of Hebrews started out. Hebrews is about the sufficiency of Christ and his exaltation above all others in all creation. The book proves that by showing his fulfillment of many things found in the Old Testament including the priesthood, sacrificial system, and many other things. This letter was undoubtedly written to a Jewish audience, who would have readily seen the connections the writer of Hebrews makes with the Old Testament.

**James**

Date written – 44  
Author – James  
Summary – James was the half brother of Jesus, sharing the same mother, Mary. James is often thought of as the Proverbs of the New Testament. It is very practical and easy to understand. This is a great place to start studying the Bible if you are looking for something practical and easily applicable.
1 Peter
Date written – 65
Author – Peter
Summary – 1 & 2 Peter were written to remind Christians of their special status with God so that they could endure some pretty intense persecution. Peter speaks to unjust suffering and living as a Christian in a hostile world.

2 Peter
Date written – 65
Author – Peter
Summary – 2 Peter was written near the end of Peter’s life and he is calling them to the truth and reminding them of the legitimacy of the Gospel, that what Christ had done for them was real. As an eyewitness who is about to die defending his faith, he wants to make sure those he is leaving behind will hold true to the Gospel because Christ will return and Christians are called to live with that in mind.

1 John
Date written – 90
Author – John
Summary – If Timothy and Titus are pastoral letters to individuals, 1-3 John read like pastoral letters written in love to help them grow closer to God and to other Christians. In 1 John, John tells us what it means to walk in the light and just how connected our love of God is with our love for others (1 John 3). We also get more “insider” facts about who Jesus is and what he has done for us.

2 John
Date written – 90
Author – John
Summary – This letter is addressed probably to a local congregation in order to help them combat false teaching. That false teaching had to do with whether or not Jesus really came in the flesh. John, who knew Jesus first hand, assures them that he did.

3 John
Date written – 90
Author – John
Summary – 3 John is written toward a specific problem in a specific church. A man named Diotrephes was causing a problem in the church and John writes to Gaius, a leader in the church, in order to help him deal with this issue.
Jude
Date written – 70
Author – Jude
Summary – Jude is very much like 2 Peter and is written to combat wickedness in the church. Jude uses several examples from scripture and Jewish tradition who did the same things and were punished by God.

Apocalyptic

Revelation
Date written – 90s
Author – John
Summary – Revelation is an often misunderstood book. It was written to Christians who were undergoing some severe persecution in order for them to have the courage to hold to their faith, even if it meant they would die for Christ. Much of what is found in the book has already taken place but a few things still have not. The book concludes the New Testament with a beautiful picture of how this world will end up. Everything will be made right and whole again and there will be no more pain, tears or death as we live in perfect relationship with God.
God’s Promises to Abraham

GOD’S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM
1. Make Abraham’s name great.
2. His descendants would inherit the land of Canaan.
3. Of his seed God would make a great nation.
4. Would be father of many nations.
5. Through his seed all nations of the earth would be blessed.

GOD GAVE THE PROMISES TO ABRAHAM
1. At HARAN. Genesis 12:1-4
2. At SHECHEM. Genesis 12:7
3. At BETHEL. Genesis 13:14-17
4. At HEBRON. Genesis 15:5, 18
5. At HEBRON. Genesis 17:1-8

GOD REPEATED THE PROMISES TO ISAAC
1. At GERAR. Genesis 26:3-4

GOD REPEATED THE PROMISES TO JACOB
1. At BETHEL (Luz). Genesis 28:13-14
2. After leaving PANDANARAM. Genesis 35:11-12
3. At BEERSHEBA. Genesis 46:3-4

- Abraham is the father of the Jews through Isaac.
  
- Abraham is the father of the Arabs through Ishmael.
  
- Christ is a descendent of Abraham. “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.”
  
  · Galatians 3:16

- Christians are the spiritual seed of Abraham. “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”
  
  · Galatians 3:29
Interesting Facts About John

**MEANING:** “Yahweh Has Been Gracious.”

**AUTHOR:** John

**TIME WRITTEN:** Between 60-90 A.D.

**POSITION IN THE BIBLE:**
- 43rd Book in the Bible
- 4th Book in the New Testament
- 4th and last of 4 books of Biography (Matthew - John)
- 23 Books to follow it.

**CHAPTERS:** 21

**VERSES:** 879

**WORDS:** 19,099

**OBSERVATIONS ABOUT JOHN:**
- In Mark 3:17, Jesus nicknamed John and his brother James, “Sons of Thunder.”
- John was the son of Zebedee and Salome.
- It appears that John was a disciple of John the Baptist until he was called to follow Jesus at the outset of the Lord’s ministry. 1:19-61
- John is mentioned three times in the Book of Acts, and each time it is association with Peter. Acts 3:1; 4:13; 8:14
- According to Revelation 1:9, John was exiled to the Island of Patmos by the Romans.
- John is identified as the disciple “whom Jesus loved.”
- Tradition says that John later lived in Ephesus.
- John was second only to Paul in the number of New Testament books written. John authored five of the New Testament:
  - John
  - 1 John
  - 2 John
  - 3 John
  - Revelation

- John was probably the last surviving apostle.
- John’s purpose in writing is stated in John 20:31 - “… That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

- Concerning the first four books of the New Testament:
  - Matthew wrote for a Jewish audience.
  - Mark wrote for a Roman audience.
  - Luke wrote for a Greek audience.
  - John wrote for everybody.

- John focuses on the meanings of the Lord’s actions rather than the actions themselves.

- The Book of John is topical rather than being so much chronological.

- The deity of Christ can be seen in the seven “I am” statements of Christ.
  - John 6:35, 48 - “I am the bread of life.”
  - John 8:12; 9:5 - “I am the light of the world.”
  - John 10:7, 9 - “I am the door.”
  - John 10:11, 14 - “I am the good shepherd.”
  - John 11:25 - I am the resurrection and the life.”
  - John 14:6 - “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”
  - John 15:1- - “I am the vine.”

- In the Book of John, Christ refers to “the Father” more than 100 times.
Interesting Facts About Luke

- The Book of Luke is the longest of the four books of Biography.
- Luke’s emphasis on chronological and historical accuracy makes it more comprehensive than Matthew, Mark, or John.
- Luke traces Jesus’ ancestry all the way back to Adam.
- The first thirty years of Jesus’ life is summed up in one verse, Luke 2:52 - “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.”
- Key words in the Book of Luke:
  - “Son of Man” - 23 times
  - “Son of God” - 7 times
  - “Kingdom of God” - 32 times.

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Interesting Facts About Mark

AUTHOR: “John whose surname was Mark.” Acts 15:3
TIME WRITTEN: Possibly between 58-68 A.D.
POSITION IN THE BIBLE: • 41st Book in the Bible
• 2nd Book in the New Testament
• 2nd of 4 books of Biography (Matthew - John)
• 25 Books to follow it.

CHAPTERS: 16
VERSES: 578
WORDS: 17,171

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT MARK:
- The writer Mark is John Mark.
- John’s mother had a large house that was used as a meeting place for the church in Jerusalem.
- According to Acts 12:12, Barnabas and John Mark were cousins.
- It may be that Peter led Mark to Christ. 1 Peter 5:13 - “Mark my son.”
- Barnabas & Saul took John Mark with them when they returned from the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15.
  • Mark proceeded with them on the 1st missionary journey.
  • Mark turned back in Phrygia in Pamphylia, and returned to Jerusalem.
- When Barnabas wanted to take Mark with them on the 2nd missionary journey, Paul refused. The disagreement led to:
  • Barnabas taking Mark and traveling to Cyprus.
  • Paul taking Silas and traveling through Syria and Cilicia.
- Eventually matters worked out between Paul and John Mark as is evidenced by:
  • Approximately 12 years later Paul wrote that Mark was with him during his first Roman imprisonment.

- Near the end of his life, Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 4:11 - “Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.”
- Of the four books of biography (Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John), the Book of Mark is the shortest of the four.
- Whereas Matthew was written for a Jewish audience, it appears that Mark was written for Roman readers.
- The Book of Mark stresses the works of Jesus rather than the words of Jesus.
  • Only four parables are given in Mark.
  • 19 miracles are recorded in rapid fashion.
  • The quick succession of events in Mark is indicated by one Greek word which occurs 41 times in the book and is translated by seven different words:
    - “Immediately” - As soon as
    - “Anon” - Shortly
    - “Forthwith” - Straightway
    - “By and by”
- Mark records the effects of amazement, fear and awe that the miracles of Christ had upon the people.
Interesting Facts About Matthew

MEANING: “Gift of the Lord.”
AUTHOR: Matthew, the son of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14)
TIME WRITTEN: Possibly between 58-68 A.D.
POSITION IN THE BIBLE:
- 40th Book in the Bible
- 1st Book in the New Testament
- 1st of 4 books of Biography (Matthew - John)
- 26 Books to follow it.

CHAPTERS: 4
VERSES: 55
WORDS: 1,782

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT MATTHEW:
- Matthew is the gospel record:
  - Written by a Jew - Matthew.
  - Written to Jews - his countrymen.
  - Written about a Jew - the long-awaited Messiah.
- Matthew uses quotes from the Old Testament to establish that Jesus Christ is indeed the Messiah.
  - More than 130 times Matthew uses quotations and allusions to the Old Testament to show that Jesus fulfills the qualifications for the Messiah.
  - Matthew often uses the phrase, “that which was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled.” That phrase does not appear once in Mark, Luke, or John.
  - The phrase, “Son of David,” referring to the Davidic line, occurs 9 times in Matthew, but only 6 times collectively in Mark, Luke, and John.
- Matthew shows his Jewish readers that Jesus Christ is the culmination of promises delivered over a thousand period.
- Matthew shows that God’s redemptive plan is well even after 400 years of prophetic silence.
- Messiah means “the Anointed One.”
- Matthew gives a large reception in his house so his associates could meet Jesus. Matthew 9:10
- The last appearance of his name in the Bible is in Acts 1:13.
- The phrase, “kingdom of heaven” appears 55 times in Matthew.
- Matthew shows his Jewish readers that Jesus Christ is the culmination of promises delivered over a thousand period.
- Matthew was a tax collector in Capernaum when Jesus called him to follow Him.
- As a publican (tax collector), Matthew was no doubt disliked by his countrymen.
- The turning point in the Book of Matthew comes in chapter 12 when the Pharisees formally reject Jesus as the Messiah, saying that His power comes from Satan and not from God. Christ’s ministry changes immediately with:
  - His increased use of parables.
  - Increased attention to his disciples.
  - His repeated statements that His death is now near.
- The Book of Matthew is placed first in the canon of the New Testament books by the early church because of its natural bridge between the Old and New Testaments.
Across
3. Third Gospel
4. Paul’s letter to an evangelist on Crete
9. Letter of joy
10. Letter after Philippians
11. Unsigned letter sometimes attributed to Paul
13. Paul wrote 2 letters to these Christians
15. Spiritual “son” of Paul

Down
1. Two letters of Paul dealing with Christian living and the second coming
2. Brother of James, son of Joseph
5. Beloved apostle and author of 4 books
6. Letter before Ephesians
7. Second Gospel
8. Practical letter found after Hebrews
12. Letter after Acts
14. Letter to a slave owner