

# New Testament Book Themes

Many themes can be traced through the books of the NT but these four are the most important:

	<b>KINGDOM</b> (Christ, King, Messiah)	<b>COVENANT</b> (Promise, Church)	<b>REDEMPTION</b> (Jesus, Salvation)	<b>PROPHECY</b> (Lord, Deity)
<b>MATTHEW</b>	Jesus offered to Israel the same kingdom predicted by Isaiah, but the nation's unbelief delayed its earthly, political dimension (19:28) until the nation believes at Christ's return (21:18-22, 41, 43; 23:36; cf. Zech 12:10-14), so that His present kingdom authority is given to the church to proclaim the gospel to all nations (28:18-20).	God's promise that "all nations will be blessed in [Abraham]" (Gen. 12:3) is fulfilled in Jesus who officially presents himself as King to Israel (21:5) and whose disciples will reign on twelve thrones with him (19:28). Until then is the "interadvent age" of the Church between Christ's two comings (Matt 13).	Jews rejected the promised earthly kingdom when they rejected Christ as Messiah (11:16-24; 21:28–22:10). This rejection delayed the earthly kingdom (19:28; 20:20-23; 23:39; 24:29-31; 25:31-46), yet Christ's death provides forgiveness for the church, named only in this gospel (16:18; 18:17).	Jesus as King of Israel is qualified for the same literal kingdom as other kings in the genealogy (1:1-17). He has all authority (19:28; 28:18) and therefore can command his followers to extend that authority throughout the world in the Great Commission (28:19-20).
<b>MARK</b>	The kingdom frees from sin through repentance (1:14-15) and grows in contrast to the stagnant state of those rejecting Jesus (4:1-34). His transfiguration depicts His position as King to teach that future glory will follow present suffering for Him and His followers (9:1-13).	Jesus as the fulfillment of the OT covenants is not emphasized due to the pastoral concern of the book addressed to suffering Roman believers who needed a practical example of one who suffered for righteousness.	Redemption is key (10:45): "For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve (cf. Christ's service in 1:14–10:52) and to give His life as a ransom for many (cf. Christ's self-sacrifice in chs. 11–15 = 37% of Mark)."	The paradox between authority and servanthood (8:35; 9:35; 10:43-44) shows Jesus unlike the type of militant ruler Jews expected of the Messiah. The Gospel abounds in high Christology (1:1; 8:29; 15:39) yet has only one OT quote (1:2).
<b>LUKE</b>	The concept of the "kingdom" and the "kingdom of God" in Luke appears at least 42 times (e.g., 1:33; 4:43; 6:20; 7:28; 8:1, 10; 9:2, 11, 27, 60, 62; 10:9, 11; 11:2, 17, 18, 20; 12:31, 32; 13:18, 20, 28, 29; 14:15; 16:16; 17:20a, 20b, 21; 18:16, 17, 24, 25, 29; 19:11; 21:10, 31; 22:16, 18, 29, 30, 23:42, 51).	Jesus is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants (e.g., 1:54-55, 69, 72-73). The New Covenant is also mentioned once (22:20) where the cup of the Lord's supper fulfills the promise of forgiveness in Jeremiah 31:34.	Luke emphasizes Christ's redemptive mission, often quoting and/or alluding to Isaiah 53 and 40–66 (22:37; 24:27, 44, 46). He is the Savior of believing Gentiles as well as Jews, so Jesus is the universal Savior who pays for the sins of the entire world.	Jesus is truly man with his genealogy starting at Adam (3:37), who, like Jesus, was a perfect man. Jesus especially fulfills this role by using the title "Son of Man"—a term used in Daniel 7:13-14 for the Messiah who will bring in the kingdom.
<b>JOHN</b>	Unlike the need for the nation of Israel to repent in Matthew and Luke, the words "repent" and "kingdom" do not appear in John, so the focus is on the individual's need to believe in Christ rather than the nation of Israel to trust in Messiah and enter the kingdom.	The word "covenant" does not appear in John, but the Spirit predicted in Ezekiel 36:25-32 has many ministries to the believer (John 13–17) in the new covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34), many of which await Israel to believe in Jesus.	We must be "born of the Spirit" to be "born again" (3:3) when we simply "believe" Jesus to be the Son of God who forgives our sins (3:16). The noun "belief" is never noted, but the verb forms to "believe" appear 87 times and in nearly every chapter!	Christ's twelve "I am" (ἐγώ εἰμι) statements reveal Him as the God of Exodus 3:14 through many metaphors such as Jesus as bread, light, door, shepherd, and life to encourage readers to trust (believe) in Jesus alone for eternal life (20:31).

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<b>ACTS</b>	The kingdom message expands from its reception by Jews in Jerusalem (1:1–6:7) to Judeans and Samaritans (6:8–8:40) to Gentiles in Rome (chs. 9–28) in many “progress reports” (2:47; 6:7; 8:40; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:30–31; also possibly 2:41; 4:31; 5:42; 8:25, etc.) to show believers that God will grow His church, not man.	Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to form the church (1:8; 2:14–18, 33, 38–39; 10:44–47), so believers should repent and be baptized to join this new covenant community called the church (2:21, 38; 3:19; 10:43, 47–48; 17:30; 26:20).	The universal appeal for salvation through the gospel is stressed (1:8; 28:30–31) in that Acts records over 80 geographical locations—more than any other New Testament book.	Jesus fulfilled the OT prophecies (2:30; 3:19, 24; 10:43; 26:6–7, 22), especially in his miracles (2:22; 10:38), death according to God’s purposes (2:23; 3:13–15, 18; 4:11; 10:39; 26:23), resurrection (2:24, 31–32; 3:15, 26; 10:40–41; 17:31; 26:23), and exaltation to God’s throne as Lord (2:25–29, 33–36; 3:13; 10:36) until he returns (3:20–21; 10:42; 17:31; cf. NTS, 137).
<b>ROMANS</b>	God’s call to enter His kingdom is His effective “summons” through gospel preaching that guarantees people will leave the kingdom of darkness (8:28–30) which is the Spirit’s work (14:17).	Jewish believers were privileged to be the first to accept the gospel (1:16; cf. 2:9–10), but Gentiles are now grafted into the Abrahamic Covenant (11:11–24).	Jesus is the God of the Gentiles as well as the God of the Jews (3:29) since both groups are saved by faith in Christ (1:16–17).	At Christ’s return, the Jewish nation will trust him as Lord when God “takes away their sins” (11:26–27) in the new covenant initiated with Israel in the messianic kingdom when her sins are forgiven (Jer. 31:34) and the Spirit given to the nation (Isa. 59:21; Ezek. 36:27).
<b>1 CORINTHIANS</b>	Christ will hand His kingdom over to the Father so that the Triune God will be shown sovereign over everything (15:27b–28), including believers with resurrected bodies (15:50).	The way to celebrate the Lord’s Supper in a worthy manner is to look forward by proclaiming Christ’s second coming to enact the New Covenant (11:26).	The gospel that Paul preached had three major elements: Christ’s vicarious death, burial, and resurrection (15:3b–8), so that believers are secure in this salvation that can never be lost (1:8–9; 3:12–15; 5:4–5; 15:58).	Those who do not love the Lord are cursed (16:22) while all believers in Christ will be resurrected (15:50).
<b>2 CORINTHIANS</b>	Paul shares events about his kingdom work that would otherwise not be known: his persecutions and hardships not recorded in Acts (11:23–27), extra details of his escape from Damascus (11:32–33), God’s revelation of Paradise to him in a vision (12:1–7), and his “thorn in the flesh” (12:7–10).	Paul and the apostles serve as ministers of the new covenant (3:1–6:10), which is one of the longest new covenant sections in the NT.	Believers are secure in salvation that can never be lost (1:21–22; 5:10).	“For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (4:5–6).

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<b>GALATIANS</b>	False teachers deceived with a “faith plus works” formula to enter the kingdom by adding works of the law to prove conversion—especially circumcision (5:6)—yet what counts is being a new creation by faith (6:14-15).	The Mosaic Covenant served well to reveal sin to Israel (3:23-25), but it didn't save them or New Covenant believers today (4:21-31), as salvation was by faith even for the 430 years between the Promise to Jacob and the giving of the Law (3:15-29).	Salvation has always been by faith—even in the OT (2:16; 3:6-9) as the Law does not save nor does it apply to the Church today, so Jewish Christians who embrace this now are truly the “Israel of God” (6:16).	Paul interprets figuratively God's blessing on Isaac (Abrahamic Covenant) rather than Ishmael (Mosaic Covenant) to reveal that his readers were operating under the wrong descendant of Abraham by following the Law (4:21-31; cf. p. 174a), which was only temporary (3:19).
<b>EPHESIANS</b>	Christ will be the ruler of both heaven and earth in a yet future age (1:9-10) that Revelation 20:1-6 reveals to be 1000 years.	Christ abolished “in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations” (2:15), so Christ's death did away with the Mosaic Law (cf. Rom. 7:7).	The clearest NT text that teaches the church age as a dispensation (3:2-6) shows that salvation makes Jews and Gentiles equal in one body, the Church (2:14, 19).	Christ can do more than any of us can imagine (3:20) in the most complete description of demons in all of Paul's writings (2:2; 6:11-16) through the person and work of the Holy Spirit (1:13-14; 2:18; 3:5, 16; 4:3-4, 30; 5:18; 6:17-18).
<b>PHILIPPIANS</b>	Jesus is pre-eminent as Lord (1:2, 20; 2:9-11; 3:20-21) and thus king over all.	Imitating the attitude of Christ provides the believers joy (ch. 1), humility (ch. 2), balance (ch. 3) and peace (ch. 4).	The person of Christ appears 70 times, including his sacrificial death (1:29; 2:8; 3:18).	The most significant christological passage in the Pauline epistles (2:5-11) affirms Christ as God who gave up certain rights in humility, but God will honor him when every person bows before him and confesses him as Lord (2:10-11).
<b>COLOSSIANS</b>	“In [Christ] all the fullness of deity lives in bodily form” (2:9) may be the clearest statement in the Bible that Jesus is God, for he “has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son” (1:13).	Christ “cancelled the written code, with its regulations” (2:14), so Christ's death did away with the Mosaic Law (cf. Rom. 7:7).	Jesus through his death has transferred believers from the dominion of darkness to light (1:13-14) in his victory over spiritual forces (2:15).	Christ's deity is evident in: (1) “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn [‘preeminent one’] over all creation. For by Him all things were made...” (1:15-16a), (2) “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him” (1:19), and (3) “For in Christ all the fullness of Deity lives in bodily form” (2:9).

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1 THESSALONIANS	Kingdom teaching is practical: "We pleaded with you, encouraged you, and urged you to live your lives in a way that God would consider worthy. For he called you to share in his Kingdom and glory" (2:12).	The fullest explanation of the Rapture in Scripture appears in this letter (4:13–5:11) where believers during the Church Age who have "fallen asleep in Jesus" will rise to meet Jesus at his return (4:14).	Jews at Thessalonica not only disbelieved but tried to hinder Paul from preaching so that Gentiles might be saved (2:16), for salvation in Jesus (noted 16 times) is our hope, not wrath (5:8-9).	Jesus is called "Lord" 24 times in five short chapters of only 89 verses, emphasizing that "He is the Sovereign who is to be obeyed" (Thomas L. Constable, "1 Thessalonians," in <i>The Bible Knowledge Commentary</i> , 2:690).
2 THESSALONIANS	Describing Satan's kingdom to oppose Jesus, Paul's clearest description of the Antichrist has three signs (the apostasy, the revelation of the Antichrist, and the removal of the restrainer) that will take place before the tribulation, which could happen days, weeks, or months after the Rapture (2:3-7).	The Day of the LORD (cf. Isa. 13:6, 9; Joel 1–2; Zeph. 1:14-16) promised defeat of Israel's enemies. Based on this, Paul <b>encouraged</b> perseverance based upon their future reward at the day of the Lord (ch. 1) and <b>corrected</b> their false notion of the day of the Lord (ch. 2) that had resulted in idleness (ch. 3).	The Savior is called "Jesus" 13 times in three short chapters of only 47 verses (Elwell & Yarbrough, <i>Encountering the New Testament</i> , 332), where his deliverance from sin (1:1, 8) also delivers from judgment (1:7-8; 2:8).	Our Master is called "Lord" 22 times in three short chapters of only 47 verses (Elwell & Yarbrough, <i>Encountering the New Testament</i> , 332), emphasizing his authority/power (1:7; 2:8) and deity as he is equal with the Father (1:12).
1 TIMOTHY	"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1:17 NIV). This "King of kings" is Jesus as he is the "only Sovereign" (6:14-15).	The new covenant community is "God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth" (3:14-15). It is local in administration (3:5, 15; 5:16).	"Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst" (1:15 NIV).	Jesus is often called Lord (1:2, 12, 14; 6:3) and even the "Lord of lords" (6:14-15).
2 TIMOTHY	The mention "by His appearing and His kingdom" (4:1 NAU) links Christ's return with his millennial rule while "bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom" (4:18 NAU) shows its eternal nature.	Paul was "an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus" (1:1).	The Scriptures make us "wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (3:15; cf. 2:10).	Jesus is called Lord 16 times in only four short chapters (e.g., 1:8; 2:19; 4:8), which makes sense as Paul was about to die for proclaiming His deity.
TITUS	Jesus is Christ (1:4) "our Savior" (3:6) whom we serve "while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (2:13).	The conduct of the church is vital witness to the truth of the gospel (2:11–3:15).	"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men" (2:11) teaches us godliness.	God promised eternal life before the beginning of time (1:2).

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<b>PHILEMON</b>	Ironically, Rome imprisoned Onesimus for crimes against Emperor Nero and Rome imprisoned Paul for allegiance to King Jesus, but through Paul Onesimus discovered Jesus as the real King.	The house church concept looms large where Paul likely wrote the owner Philemon, mistress of the house Apphia, and their son, the key elder Archippus (1-2).	Paul alludes to the atoning death of Jesus when applying the debt of Onesimus to Paul: "If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me" (17-18).	Philemon placed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (5), from whom he received grace and peace (3).
<b>HEBREWS</b>	The "Sabbath rest for the people of God" (4:9) will be the millennial kingdom where Christ will rule due to His atoning death (2:9-13), and the readers will rule with Him as "partakers" if they remain faithful (3:14).	The admonishment to this New Covenant community (ch. 8) not to stop meeting together (10:25) may show that the readers belonged to a sect such as the Essenes.	Jesus fulfills the entire tabernacle and temple system, for He is superior to its priestly system in His high priestly work (4:14-10:18).	The temple and sacrificial system would soon be destroyed (8:13), which was fulfilled in AD 70, so five severe warnings (2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:8; 10:19-39; 12:18-29) admonish readers not to reject the Lord for Judaism.
<b>JAMES</b>	The readers were believers since they are deemed "brothers" (1:2, 16, 19; 2:1, 5, 14; 3:1, 10, 12; 4:11; 5:7, 9, 10, 12, 19). Their key need was to show Christ's kingdom rule in their behavior.	The new covenant (church) community is called a "synagogue" ("meeting," 2:2) since all early believers were Jews when this early letter was penned (1:1).	James uses words for "save" five times (1:21; 2:14; 4:12; 5:15, 20). None relate to salvation but instead "to save the life" from premature death. See Zane Hodges, <i>The Epistle of James</i> (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1994), 41.	The recipients had faith in "our Lord Jesus Christ" (2:1) but needed to put away their hypocritical, double-minded (1:8; 3:10) dispositions in order to grow in maturity and holiness. In effect James says, "If Jesus is truly Lord, then <i>act</i> like it!"
<b>1 PETER</b>	Nero deserves honor (2:17), so how much more does Jesus!	The Church, like Israel, is also a people of God with special privileges (2:4-12).	The death of Jesus provides spiritual healing for "by His wounds you have been healed" (2:24).	Jesus declared himself Lord over imprisoned spirits following his death (3:18-22).
<b>2 PETER</b>	Faithful believers will be rewarded: "Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (1:11).	Scoffers of the Church age will ridicule the Bible on Christ's return, Creation and the Universal Flood (3:3-6).	The destiny of all apostates in hell shows that believers will be protected as much as apostates will be condemned (2:3b-10a).	No OT prophet messed up or misinterpreted his prophecy because it didn't originate in his own will but came from God who only used his mouth as a willing instrument of the Spirit's message (1:20-21).
<b>1 JOHN</b>	The twin themes of obedience (1:1-2:29; 5:4-21) and love (3:1-5:3) best show the positive impact Christ's kingdom has on our lives.	New covenant truth is best seen in our behavior (4:7-21).	Jesus is "the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world" (2:2 NLT), with assurance and security of salvation (5:13-15).	Trusting Christ as Lord should lead to obedience and love as protection from early Gnosticism and any heresy that denies Jesus as Lord (2:26).

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<b>2 JOHN</b>	The kingdom life balances love and truth (vv. 1-6) so that neither invalidates the other.	An anonymous woman and her children are addressed (v. 1), who likely opened their home for church services and housed traveling preachers.	One evidence of salvation is continuing to believe that Jesus died in a real body (v. 7), whereas those who deny this “do not have God” (v. 9), likely meaning they lose reward (v. 8).	Jesus is Lord even though he is human, as “many deceivers have gone out into the world. They deny that Jesus Christ came in a real body. Such a person is a deceiver and an antichrist” (v. 7 NLT).
<b>3 JOHN</b>	As members of Christ’s kingdom, we “should support [missionaries] so that we can be their partners as they teach the truth” (v. 8 NLT).	The house church existed as the primary institution that spread God’s new covenant truth (vv. 3-4).	Believers should replace opposition to Jesus like that of Diotrephes (vv. 9-11a) with the hospitable, good deeds like Demetrius (v. 11b-12).	Traveling teachers “are traveling for the Lord” (v. 7 NLT) since they have a message no unbeliever considers worthy of support.
<b>JUDE</b>	“All glory, majesty, power, and authority are his before all time, and in the present, and beyond all time! Amen” (v. 25b NLT).	The Church has unbelieving pretenders that have secretly infiltrated them with libertine practices denying the lordship of Jesus Christ (v. 4).	God alone is Savior “through Jesus Christ our Lord” (v. 25a NLT).	Christ will judge pretenders for their ungodly actions and words spoken against Him at His Second Coming with saints and angels (vv. 14b-15).
<b>REVELATION</b>	This book alone reveals the length of Christ’s kingdom as 1000 years (20:1-6), as well as the fact that it is future and earthly since the saints “will rule on the earth” (5:10).	Christ’s letters to seven churches shows his authority over them even though they suffer (1:9; 2:9-10; 3:10) and he gives eight promises to reward faithful believers who overcome the world (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7).	Jesus is deemed the victorious lion once (5:5), but the greater emphasis is Jesus as sacrificial lamb since this appears about 30 times in the NAU (5:6; 7:14, 17, etc.).	The glorified Jesus Christ is revealed better than anywhere in the Bible to prove Christ’s ability to handle the Church’s internal and external problems (1:12-16) and assure believers of his return (19:11-16; 22:7, 12, 17, 20).