

Audio Teaching Sermon

Message #25

Compiling the New Testament

[**A** Intro – Pastor Jefferson 0:00 thru 1:31]

Greetings and salutations! Welcome to **Message #25** of the audio teaching series. I am Pastor Jefferson and today we will continue our discussion as to how Jesus delivered the words of the **New Testament** to us. Most folks are aware that there are **27 books** in the New Testament, made up by the **four gospels**, the **Book of Acts**, along with **21 letters**, or **epistles** and the **Book of Revelation**. The first books we see in the New Testament are the four Gospels, written by **Matthew, Mark, Luke** and **John**. The Apostle **Matthew** wrote his Gospel first, completing it sometime around **50 AD**. To put this in perspective, that was **16 to 17 years after** the death and resurrection of Jesus. My purpose in this sermon is to present how the New Testament was put into place by God, using the hands of men—which is exactly how the Old Testament was produced. God is ever consistent. The first **5 books** of the Old Testament were written by **Moses**, a man who had the Word directly dictated to him. And the first **5 books** of the New Testament were also written by persons who had the word of the LORD directly dictated to them. It was the words of **Jesus** they originally heard, and then were able to recall, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

[**B** New Incorporated the Old 1:31 thru 2:56]

Any study of the NT cannot be completed apart from a careful contemplation of its affiliation to the OT. After all, the LORD Jesus frequently quoted the OT in His teaching, and it was the prime document which He Himself studied during His training. The Hebrews of Jesus' day held the OT in very high esteem, accepting it as the fully inspired and authoritative word of God Almighty. So, it is not surprising that the early Christian church also held this view, as its inaugural members came from out of the Hebrew population. Both documents were written out of the mind of God, so we should not be surprised that both had profound influence on the early church. We read phrases within the NT such as *"Scripture says,"* or *"This came to pass such that which was spoken might be fulfilled."* They show the integral relationship between the OT Scripture and the new Christian orientated verses. We know this as early Christian worship services carried over the Jewish tradition of having someone stand in the sanctuary and read OT verses aloud to

the assembled worshippers.

[**C** Adjure Means to Command 2:56 thru 4:47]

After the reading was done, the pastor would then preach his message which included a Christian oriented interpretation, as per the guidance received from the Holy Spirit, giving special attention to the passages which had direct fulfillment in the life of Jesus Christ. Of course, the early messages focused on the teachings of Jesus, as they carried the same authority as Jesus Himself, just as when He was still physically with them. In **Matthew's Gospel, 28:20**, it is the 2nd half of the Great Commission, which reads, ¹ *"and teaching them to obey everything* ² *I have commanded you."* They could not have accomplished this apart from the help of the Holy Spirit. Parallel to this ritual was the practice of reading letters from the other apostles. We see this in **Colossians 4:16**, where the apostle Paul wrote: ¹ *"After this letter has been read to you,* ² *see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans* ³ *and that you in turn* ⁴ *read the letter from Laodicea."* We discover more evidence in **1 Thess 5:27**, where Paul writes, ¹ *"I adjure you by the Lord* ² *to have this letter read* ³ *to all the brethren."* The word we find for **1. adjure** is [1] *en-hor-KEE-zoe* and it means **'to charge under oath or to solemnly command.'** Today we'd equate this word to swearing an oath in a court of law. The single use of this word brings high emphasis on this early command by Paul.

[**D** Popularity of Paul's Words 4:47 thru 6:32]

Since the whole of the Bible is applicable to us, we too must make these words known to all members of Christ's church. More than anything else, Paul was exhorting the faithful to not cherry pick their favorite parts of Scripture, but rather to utilize the whole of the Bible when making disciples. There is no consensus as to how soon the swapping and reading of Paul's epistles began with the Christian community, but a collection of epistles may well have been made within the period soon after Paul's death. Peter wrote in **2 Peter 3:15**, ¹ *"Regard the patience of our LORD as salvation;* ² *just as also our beloved brother Paul,* ³ *according to the wisdom given him,* ⁴ *wrote to you."* **Verse 16,** ¹ *"As also in all his letters,* ² *speaking in them of these things."* So, we can see that right from the start, the apostle Paul had a huge impact on early Christianity via his writings, even after his death, when he and his local popularity were no longer the force spreading his

words around the churches. I want you to notice the warning Peter states in the rest of **verse 16**, regarding Paul’s writings. ³ “*In which some things are hard to understand,* ⁴ *which the untaught* ⁵ *and unstable distort,* ⁶ *as they do also the rest of the Scriptures,* ⁷ *to their own destruction.*” Wow! If there was ever strict evidence that the Scriptures are essentially locked up for those who are unfledged, here it is.

[**E** **Untaught and Uneducated** **6:32 thru 8:02**]

Look at the Greek word for **difficult to understand**. It is [1] **die-NO-eh-ta**, translates to **‘hard or challenging to comprehend or perceive.’** The term describes something which is exigent to grasp or cognize. **Cognize** is defined to mean **‘to notice something or become conscious of it.’** Peter is specifically speaking about the Word of God. But not just the words themselves—he is talking about the nuances of the actual meaning of the words themselves. Peter is discussing the complex ideas and teachings which require much deeper insight and divine discernment to even begin to understand. This is only available via the Holy Spirit. Notice the word **untaught**. It is [1] **am-mah-THEE-is** and means **‘the unlearned or the ignorant.’** The word is specifically used to describe someone who is lacking in knowledge or understanding. It conveys a sense of one being uninstructed or without formal education, implying a deficiency in understanding spiritual or moral truth. Peter is not saying they are ignorant people, only that they are untaught and uneducated. Once more, the Bible is speaking of those who are not enrolled or have completed discipleship training.

[**F** **Doubtful and Questionable Preaching** **8:02 thru 9:39**]

Look now at the word **unstable**. It is the word [1] **as-TER-rik-toy** and translates as **‘being unsteady, unstable or unsettled.’** It is where our word **asterisk** comes from. The idea here relates to words which are without support or foundation. The word **asterisk** **‘is a reference mark used to indicate omission, doubtful or questionable matter.’** The word Peter is using here describes a person who is morally and spiritually unsteady, easily swayed by false teachings and temptations. Once again folks, all of this information comes directly out of the dictionary. And each of the Greek words I just defined are all used only this one time in Scripture, making the point even more salient. The unfledged folks who attempt to reveal the meaning of Scripture only manage to distort it. Here’s another word

only used one time. Look at the Greek word for **distort** that Peter uses: It is [1] **streh-BLOU-sin** and means **'to twist or to pervert language.'** Such persons are intentionally misrepresenting and misinterpreting the teachings of Jesus Christ. The word conveys the idea of someone taking something which is straight and true and intentionally bending it out of shape, the action having the implication of doing so deliberately and deceitfully.

[**G** Paul's Letters Saw Widespread Use 9:39 thru 11:00]

The point is that ample evidence exists which proves that there was a collection compiled of Paul's writings well prior to the second century. There are just too many extant writings present in the historical record which echo his words for the presence of such a list to be ignored. The 13 epistles that Paul authored must have been compiled and used for the spread of the Gospel. This makes total sense with the passing of eyewitnesses, and especially when the apostolic witnesses were no longer available to act as authenticators of doctrine, a pressing need would have been felt for the authoritative record, not only of the teaching of Jesus, but also of His deeds. This was an important motivating factor in the production of written gospels. The writing of gospels would have been a God-driven phenomenon to meet various special needs of the early church. It is certain that, as the size of the church grew, the need for authoritative literature, particularly the gospels, would become more acute. They would be all the more valuable for evangelistic purposes as the eyewitnesses to the events of the life of Jesus slowly passed away.

[**H** Assembled by the 2nd Century 11:00 thru 12:49]

John, in the 4th gospel, makes the case that the other gospels are all linked together. Look now over in **John 20:30**. John writes, ¹ *"Therefore, there are many other signs* ² *Jesus also performed* ³ *in the presence of the disciples,* ⁴ *which are not written in this book;"* John is speaking of his book. So, John at the time he wrote his gospel, he must have seen and read the other three gospels. He goes on to say in **verse 31**, ¹ *"But these* ² *have been written* ³ *so that you may believe* ⁴ *that Jesus is the Christ,* ⁵ *the Son of God,* ⁶ *and that believing you may have life* ⁶ *in His name."* As I've said, the first five books of the OT serve as an introduction and basis for the study of the remaining document. So it is with the 4 gospels and the book of Acts. They too form the preview and

foundation for the entire NT. So, by the 2nd century, the authoritative and exclusive use of the gospels, the book of Acts and the 13 letters written by Paul were cemented into the orthodox Christian church by their widespread use. These books clearly stood out from all others as being authentic records accurately reflecting the life and teaching of Jesus. It is important to know that the book of the **Acts of the Apostles** was written by **Luke**. This book, which is quite closely linked with the gospel of Luke, appears to be a continuation of it. So, it is clear from the historical record that Jesus was assimilating His words together, exactly as He promised.

[**I** Councils of Laodicea and Carthage 12:49 thru 14:24]

In addition to the 13 epistles written by Paul being gathered into a group, the other NT epistles were also gradually included over time. There is strong evidence for **1 Peter** and **1 John** being included very quickly. And as the close study of the other epistles took place, they each were deemed to be of the same Holy Spirit quality and were gradually incorporated into the NT. It is also important to note that there were many books which were rejected as not being divinely inspired. Eventually, the church councils at Laodicea and Carthage confirmed the canon or limits of the NT. Those limits had long been defined by their usage among the uber majority of the orthodox churches. The **council of Laodicea** took place in **363 AD**, following the conclusion of the war between the Roman and Persian empires. This war was essentially a struggle between a revival of paganism versus the teachings of the church. The council of Laodicea was conducted for the purpose of regulating the conduct of church members. They were seeking to remove certain practices which had crept into the church. One such example is they condemned the use of the dark art of **astrology**, as it was deemed to be a Satanically driven practice for predicting future events. Only God has that power and none else.

[**J** Completion of the Canon 14:24 thru 16:08]

The third council of **Carthage** was held 34 years later in **397 AD**. Each council produced a list of the books which were to be formally included into the NT. When the lists approved by these two councils are compared, the only difference was the exclusion of the book of Revelation from the Laodicean council and its subsequent inclusion in the Carthaginian assembly. From the time of Moses writing down the first 5 books of the OT until the last

book was completed required nearly 1,000 years. From the completion of the book of Matthew until the NT was officially compiled took one third of that time—an average of 333 years. As a collection of Christian books, the NT possesses in and of itself considerable historical significance. The Biblical gospels are practically the only source of information concerning the historical Jesus. This is due to the fact that the world, as controlled by Satan, wants the name of Jesus to be obliterated from all speech. As you will see in a coming lesson, allies of Satan even went so far as to try and create their own version of the NT by attempting to bring in books which seem to be of the same ilk but are nothing more than pollution. They always contain fatal farcical elements, Satanic motivated contamination, which can only bring doubt, uncertainty and eventually dissent to the ranks of Christians regarding their education and edification.

[**Z** **Some Final Thoughts** **16:08 thru 17:57**]

Listen, my friends, the history of how the NT arrived to us is important for two main reasons. **First** of all, it was the spoken words of Jesus which prophesied the coming of His word to man. Jesus promised that His words would be brought to the minds of His disciples. And Jesus used members of His original 12 disciples, as well as those who were close acquaintances of them to achieve that. When a person today accepts the message of the Gospel and seeks to become a true and genuine follower of Jesus, they gain that same advantage. Jesus is still our teacher. And secondly, God is ever consistent. His word promises that to us. We see it woven throughout Scripture. This is a key quality missing from the documents of other religions. I hope that as we continue down our journey to God, that you each begin to fully see within your mind's eye, that the text of the Bible is very special. And not because someone wrote a bunch of flowery language, but rather because God as He reveals His word to you, that you see the sheer miraculous nature of how the meanings of the words are quite specific. And as you accumulate more and more knowledge regarding our Savior Jesus, that you begin forming what is truly an intimate relationship with Him. That is the only goal of these sermons. Please, keep listening and know that God loves us so very much. **So, until next time my beloved, this has been Pastor Jefferson, speaking in God's Holy name and for His glory alone. Amen!**