

What is the New Testament all about...really:

Tonight's question: What are the only 2 ways of learning truth?

The New Testament is especially designed to set forth the Lord Jesus Christ to meet the needs of our own lives:

The Gospels are the biographical section of the New Testament. *There we learn who Jesus is and what He did!*

Who is Jesus? He is the Son of God became man for us. *What did He do?* The cross, the resurrection and all He accomplished in His life. In the gospels we discover the incredible secret which the Son of God revealed among men. *We should never think that the Gospels are merely the story of the life of Jesus and the most important part of the New Testament are the epistles of Paul - for example.* You cannot grasp the epistles without the Gospels. **[Read John 6:57]**. This is one of the key verses in the Gospels that explains all that He did - the miracles He wrought, the words He spoke, and the power He exercised among men. It is the explanation for all He accomplished through the cross and the resurrection.

In the book of **The Acts**, we have the account of the beginning of the church. The church is nothing more nor less than the body of Jesus Christ today, *through which He intends to keep on being who He is and doing what He did.*

What Jesus did was to pour out His life in order that He might pour it into a body of people who would express *that* life throughout the entire planet Earth. **[Read Acts 1:8]** The book of The Acts is a simple, straightforward telling of how this body was formed, how it was filled with the Holy Spirit, and how it began to grow out from Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria to all parts of the earth. This body of people showed the glory of the life of the Son of God, that was still working among men, in the same ministry that was Jesus' when He was here in the flesh - transforming and changing the lives of men.

In the **Epistles**, we have the Lord Jesus set forth again in terms of an explanation of *how He is who He is in us, and how He did what He did.*

These are uncomplicated letters. There is nothing like a letter to reveal what we really are. In the letters of the New Testament, we find explained for us in very practical terms, how Christ lives His life in us - *how He is what He is through us, and how what He did becomes relevant to life around us*, in terms of our own personality. These letters are almost all composed in the same simple pattern. The first part is doctrinal, the second part practical. The first part is simply a setting forth of truth. The second is the applying of the truth. Truth must be applied. **[Read John 8:32]**

Until we begin to learn *who Jesus is and what He does*, and then apply it our own life and heart, we can read our Bibles for years and years, and yet go on totally

unchanged and untouched

The worldwide church, the body of Christ, comprises almost entirely of people who are defeated, discouraged, absolutely at a loss to know where to turn or what to do. *(And this includes the pastors and ministers)* We spend our time beating our breasts in a desperate attempt to call God to our rescue, totally ignorant of, or at least ignoring, what He had already done for us - we are living in *unbelief*. This is the problem in the Christian experience.

[Read 1 Cor 2:16] What does this verse state? But what are we saying in our prayers and our lives? *"Oh, God, give us the mind of Christ!"*

What kind of faith is it that prays, "Give me the mind of Christ"? All the marvelous promises of the Scriptures are continually being cast aside by we Christians because we do not believe what they say. We are always asking God for things He already has granted us.

In 1994 we all saw on television, our new President, Nelson Mandela, as he took office. When he raised his right hand, and repeated the simple lines of the oath of office, he became the President of South Africa! He believed it, and began to act like the President, issuing orders and governing. He began immediately to act as the President of South Africa! He didn't look any different - perhaps he did not feel any different. He had no outward change. There was simply a word which he believed, and on the basis of that word, his entire life began to change, because he believed that the oath made him President of South Africa!

The purpose of the **Epistles** is simply to show us in the clearest, most practical language the splendid truths which are involved in this great principle - *Jesus Christ lives his life in us*. These truths are not only stated for us, but they are continually applied in the most practical way to every circumstance and situation we can encounter.

We can find the truth coming through the personalities of the writers of these letters:

- *Peter the fisherman*, using the key to open the door, always presenting the beginnings of spiritual things, catching men at the beginning of life. That is what a fisherman does.
- There is *Paul the tentmaker*, always construct-ing and building and completing, sewing something together, making something. That is a tentmaker's job.
- There is *John the net mender*. That is what he was doing when Christ first found him. John's ministry is one of repairing and restoring and bringing back to God's original pattern. This is a vital ministry this is! *(This is what I believe Mariaan and I have been called to be - net menders!)*

Finally we come to the book of **Revelation**. This is the only book in the New Testament which deals completely with prophecy. *Here we have unveiled for us the time when who Jesus is, and what He did, will become evident to all the universe.*

In Revelation we can read and comprehend *how* the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, *how* he shall reign forever and ever, and *how* the secret which is revealed in the Gospels, that is - *man is to be totally available to an indwelling God, so he can triumph in victory over all the concentrated forces of sin, death and hell!*

One verse summarises the entire message of the New Testament: **Colossians 1:27b!**

We do not have any hope if we do not have that. If Christ is not active in us, and we have not already begun to experience the mystery of his life being lived in us, then:

1. First of all, we are not Christians, and
2. Second, we have no hope - no hope of glory, no hope of fulfillment, no hope of ever being anything.

The purpose of the New Testament is simply to unveil to us the One who is the full answer to all our needs. If it doesn't do that, it has not served its purpose. The New Testament will then be a totally useless book. It isn't the Bible that we need. It is the Christ who is seen in the Bible. The Bible itself is a mere instrument. It isn't the Bible that sustains us: It is Christ in us! This is what transforms us. The New Testament was written in order that we may see him like Paul writes in Colossians: "*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*"

(Next time: The Old Testament's 5 steps to maturity)