

From Matthew to Revelation

Is there a progression of the books of the New Testament in our experience in the church life?

The 27 Books of the New Testament

Matthew

Mark

Luke

John

Acts

Romans

1 Corinthians

2 Corinthians

Galatians

Ephesians

Philippians

Colossians

1 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians

1 Timothy

2 Timothy

The Books of the New Testament

Titus

Philemon

Hebrews

James

1 Peter

2 Peter

1 John

2 John

3 John

Revelation

The Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

- The fulfillment of the Old Testament
- Everything the Old Testament said about the coming of Jesus Christ our Saviour actually happens
- Two pairs of contrasts (Matthew and Mark; Luke and John)

Matthew: the proper introduction
King and Seed for the establishing
of the heavenly kingdom with the
heavenly words

The book of the genealogy of
Jesus Christ, the **son of David**,
the **son of Abraham**

(Matthew 1:1)

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A kingly
genealogy

Mark: the diligent deeds of a
servant to back up the
heavenly words in Matthew

**A servant has no
genealogy**

A sense of urgency

The word « immediately » is
used 42 times in the Gospel
of Mark

Luke: a regular,
normal man, a
man who lived
among us and
with us

And Jesus Himself was
beginning to be about thirty
years of age, being (**as was
supposed**) **son of Joseph**, son
of of Heli,

(Luke 3:23)

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John: God
Himself

No genealogy

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In **the beginning** was the Word,
and the **Word was with God**,
and the **Word was God**.

(John 1:1)

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The divine
life, to know
God Himself

The Gospels

- The earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus in the flesh
- All the seeds of the New Testament are sown in the gospels
- Through the words of Jesus spoken to His disciples with Him on the earth
- At the time when Jesus spoke His words, the Spirit was not yet
- The Spirit had not yet entered into the disciples
- Therefore, they were, for the most part, unable to understand or experience what Jesus was telling them

Acts

- The move of the Spirit through the disciples
- The discipling of nations, beginning in Jerusalem
- The establishing of churches
- The spread of the Lord's testimony
- The Lord's work through the apostles and the believers
- The flow of the Spirit, beginning with Jerusalem
- The flow of the Spirit, a new and fresh start, in Antioch
- The spread of the Lord's testimony in the Gentile areas
- The mixture of Judaism and Christianity
- The gospels and the book of Acts mark the end of the historical and narrative accounts in the New Testament

But you shall receive power, the Holy Spirit coming upon you. And you shall be witnesses to Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

(Acts 1:8)

A potentially tremendous lack, and even a serious threat to the continuation of the Christian faith

- **If the New Testament were to end at this juncture!**

Romans

- The beginning of the epistles
- A time of reinforcement
- A time to step back and consider the meaning and purpose of our faith, our Christian and church life
- What exactly have we believed?
- In whom have we believed?
- From what have we believed?
- Who were we?
- What is our origin?
- What is our destiny?
- What is our life?
- Who is God?
- Who is Christ?
- Who is the Spirit?
- So many things that Jesus talked about in the gospels now start to become clear

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ,
a called apostle, separated to
the gospel of God

(Romans 1:1)

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Romans: The Gospel of God

Paul's Gospel

- Defined like no where else in the New Testament
- From beginning to end
- From condemnation of the world to the church life
- All the experiences of the growth in life, from redemption and justification to glorification, passing through sanctification and transformation, with the Body of Christ as the sphere

1 Corinthians

- The nuts and bolts of the church life
- The experience of the church life in a locality
- Very practical
- Dealing with problems and issues in the church life and in the daily life
- The unveiling of Christ and His cross as the solution to all the problems
- The living out of the book of Romans

2 Corinthians

- Having dealt with specific problems, the apostle Paul now proceeds to address a more subtle challenge:
- The relationship between the apostle and the church
- Who are the apostles?
- What do they have?
- What is their constitution?
- The new covenant ministry and its ministers
- The effect of the new covenant ministry

The heart of the divine revelation

- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians

Galatians

Only Christ

Not Christ

plus

Saved from the
religious age

Ephesians

- The mystery of Christ: the church
- The mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself (1:9)
- God's eternal purpose: Christ and the church
- The church, not from the point of view of 1 and 2 Corinthians and Galatians
- But from a heavenly point of view
- When we are free from the religious age (Galatians), we are able to enter into the heart of God, and enjoy what God has prepared for us in the heavenlies in Christ (Ephesians)

Philippians

- The fellowship of a local church with an apostle
- A sweet, joyful experience of Christ unadulterated by anything extra, and what is on His heart
- The practical outworking of Ephesians
- The experience of the Body revealed in Ephesians, through the thinking of the same thing among the believers, and through the supplying of the apostle's need by the believers
- Philippians brings us into the pursuing and gaining of the Christ in Galatians

What more is needed?

- We might think that Philippians should be the pinnacle of the divine revelation. What more is needed?
- Yet Colossians is needed to complete the cycle
- Galatians began with the need to see only Christ, not Christ plus something else
- Then two books, Ephesians and Philippians, bring us into God's heart and how to experience what is in God's heart
- Then Colossians brings us back again to Christ, but this time in a different way

Colossians

- The person of Christ, rather than the work of Christ
- The complete God and perfect man
- Our experience can become a substitute for Christ and become a philosophy
- We may even form a philosophy of our experience
- We need to know who Christ is, not just in a general way

A turn

- Is there a church or group of believers, even new believers, who can live out such a divine revelation and commitment unveiled thus far?

1 and 2 Thessalonians:

A fresh start and a wonderful hope

- With all the divine revelation imparted, and the gospel of God defined, within the context of local churches, there is the need for a fresh start
- A young church
- How can a young church grow and live out the reality of the divine revelation unveiled from Romans to Colossians?
- How can a young church wait for the Lord's return?

Remembering without ceasing
your work of faith and labor of
love and patience of hope in our
Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of
God and our Father,

(1 Thessalonians 1:3)

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1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon

- How can churches grow in life and operation?
- Pillars are needed
- The need for pillars, brothers and sisters, to be raised up in life and operation with ministry (that is, a service that matches the person)

1 and 2 Timothy

- Timothy was Paul's genuine child in faith
- How do brothers and sisters grow in the church life?
- What is needed?
- What is their constitution?
- What is their operation?

Titus

- Evaluating the blessings and shortcomings of a local church
- Pillars raised up to discern the Lord's blessings, and the shortcomings that exist
- Able to cooperate with the Lord's operation in a local church

Another turn

- The subsequent books of the New Testament are no longer written to churches, but to the general Christian audience
- Or to specific kinds of believers in a certain environment
- For example, sojourners of the dispersion, twelve tribes of the dispersion, those who are called, the Hebrews

Philemon

- How pillars operate in a local church in harmony, dependent on one another
- The apostle
- The fathers, the mothers
- The young soldiers
- The saints

Hebrews

- The superiority of Christ
- The need at this time for a heavenly comparison of Christ with the old covenant
- The need at this time for God's speaking directly, not through any human agent
- Hence, the author of this epistle is unidentified
- Like the Gospel of John and Ephesians, this book brings us into the heavenly view

The old things
become
comfortable and
routine

James

- The contrast between Hebrews and James
- The contrast between the heavenly superiority of Christ and the Jewish law and ordinances
- The contrast between the new covenant and the old covenant
- James is needed at this juncture both negatively and positively
- Practical outworking of the faith of Hebrews 11
- Knowing oneself (one's tongue)

1 and 2 Peter

- As we live a heavenly life of faith in the new covenant in the church life
- Our faith must be tried or proved
- Through sufferings
- Under God's governmental dealings
- Peter brings us into God's government or arrangement to perfect us

1, 2 and 3 John

- Eventually, after all the revelations and visions and experiences in the church life
- We need to be brought back to the beginning
- It is easy to become old, self-satisfied, proud
- All the doctrines, knowledge and experiences eventually do not work
- John brings us back to that which was from the beginning, the word of life, the current, living experience of handling the word of God, God Himself

Jude

- At the same time, along with John, there is the need for a strong contending of the faith in a time of decline
- If John is the apostle of love, Jude is a stern contender and reprover of those who oppose
- Jude is the bridge that leads us to Revelation which will bring in God's judgement

Revelation

- The need for revelation
- To see Christ as the center and the carrying out of all the revelation unveiled from the book of Matthew
- To have a turn to see the local churches in a fresh way, (e.g. the churches as lampstands)
- To see the preparation of the bride of Christ for the coming of the Bridegroom

And I turned to see the voice that
spoke with me.

And having turned, I saw seven
golden lampstands.

(Revelation 1:12-13b)

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Revelation

- A call to still come and drink the living water
- A conclusion that incites us to pursue, to know, to see Christ and His heart's desire, the church

And the Spirit and the bride say,
Come! And let the one hearing
say, Come! And let the one who
is thirsty come. And he who is
willing, let him take of the Water
of Life freely.

(Revelation 22:17)