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Authors of the New Testament



Overview of the NT Documents

The New Testament recounts the birth, life, mission, death, burial, resurrection, and resurrection appearances of the world's Savior—Jesus Christ (Matthew—John). Through the New Testament we gain a clear picture of the figures and types that were under the Old Testament which pointed to Jesus and His church (e.g., Isa 2:2,3; 7:14, 9:6). We read about the establishment of His church on the day of Pentecost where all the saved were placed after they heard and obeyed the gospel message (Acts 2). Churches were established and epistles (letters) were written to address issues that had arisen within some of them. These letters instructed them on how to live now that they were Christians and how to correct issues that arose. Some letters encouraged

persecuted Christians to remain faithful in the midst of the fiery darts of the world. Lastly, they tell of the ultimate victory of the saints and their eternal reward in heaven.

The writers of the New Testament documents were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Four were apostles of Jesus (Matthew, John, Paul, and Peter), while the other four would have been considered prophets (Mark, Luke, James, and Jude). And in some regards, even the apostles were considered prophets. Even James the brother of Jesus is called an apostle (Gal 1:19). Also, there may have been 9 authors of the NT if Paul (or one of the other beforementioned did not author Hebrews).

The Authors

Below are a few brief facts about the Christian authors of the New Testament. These writers wrote about the birth (incarnation), life, ministry, passion (suffering), death, burial, resurrection, and resurrection appearances of Jesus the Christ.

Matthew – “gift of the Lord.” His Hebrew name was Levi (Luke 5:27). He was the “son of Alphaeus” (Mark 2:14). This Alphaeus seems to be different from Alphaeus, the father of James the Less—another apostle of Jesus. He was a publican (tax collector) at Capernaum (Matt 9:9; 10:3; see also—Matt 9:9,10; 10:3; Mark 2:14,15; 3:18; Luke 5:27-29; 6:15; Acts 1:13). He penned Matthew.

Mark – known as John Mark (Acts 12:25). John (Jewish name) and Mark or Marcus (Roman or Latin name). Mary, his mother, resided in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). Nothing is known of his father. The context of Acts 12:12 may indicate that he came from a family of wealth. He was the cousin of Barnabas

(Col 4:10). He had a spiritual relationship with Peter (1 Pet 5:13). He went with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5, see also—Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:36-39; Col 4:10-11; 2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 1:24). He penned Mark.

Luke – “luminous or white” (light giving). Luke does not appear to have been an eyewitness to the personal work of Jesus (cf. Luke 1:2). Many believe that he was a Gentile (Greek). However, some have argued that he was a Jew. He was a physician (Col 4:14). He traveled with Paul (cf. the “we”/“us” passages in Acts 16:10-13; 20:5; 20:6; 21:1-18; 27:1ff; 28:1ff; Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 1:24). He penned the Gospel of Luke and Acts.

John – “the Lord is gracious.” He was the son of Zebedee and Salome? (Mary’s sister?); brother of James (an apostle of Jesus); and cousin of Jesus. Jesus named John and James – Boanerges, “sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17). His family were fishermen by trade (Matt 4:21-22). Zebedee could have been a man of wealth since he had “hired servants” (Mark 1:20). His mother may have been Salome and could have been a sister of Jesus’s mother (which would make Jesus, John, and James cousins) (Matt 27:55–56; Mark 15:40–41; John 19:25). John, James, and Peter were the only ones to witness the raising of Jairus’s daughter (Mark 5:37; Luke 8:51); the transfiguration (Matt 17:1ff; Mark 9:2ff; Luke 9:28ff); and the agony of Jesus in Gethsemane (Matt 26:36ff; Mark 14:32ff; Luke 22:39ff). He penned the Gospel of John, 1, 2, 3 John, and Revelation.

Paul – known also by his Hebrew name Saul. His Greek name Paul derives from the Latin Paulus which means “little.” He was born in the Greco-Roman city of Tarsus (Acts 21:39). He was a tentmaker by trade (18:3). He was a Roman citizen (22:28). He studied under the feet of Gamaliel (22:3; 26:4–5). He was a Pharisee and before his conversion he was a persecutor of the church (Phil 3:5). He went on three missionary journeys preaching and teaching the gospel (Acts 13:1ff). He authored 13 books (Romans–Philemon).

James – he was the brother of Jesus (Gal 1:19) and Jude (Judas) (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3). James (and his

other brothers) were unbelievers during Jesus’s ministry (John 7:2–5; cf. Matt 12:45–50; Mark 3:31–35; Luke 8:19–21). James and his brothers become believers after his resurrection (Acts 1:14 and 1 Cor 15:7). He became a leader in the Jerusalem church (cf. Gal 1:9; 2:9; Acts 15:13ff). Thus, James went from an unbeliever to a follower of his brother Jesus, his Savior, and a leader in the church of Christ. He would also pen one of the first Christian documents (the book of James).

Peter – his original name was Simon (“hearer”). He was the son of Jonah (Matt 16:17; John 21:16). Peter was a fisherman who was from Bethsaida (John 1:44). As a fisherman he worked with the sons of Zebedee (James and John) (Luke 5:10). He would later live in Capernaum (Mark 1:21, 29). He was married (Mark 1:29, 1 Cor 9:5). His brother, Andrew, introduced him to Jesus (John 1:40–42). He authored 1 and 2 Peter. Also, he may have been behind the information used by John Mark to write his Gospel.

Jude – his name was actually Judas, but to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot, it was truncated to Jude. Judas is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name Judah. He was one of the brothers of Jesus and James (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3). He penned the book of Jude.

Study

¹Date and place the books of the NT in chronological order. ²Dig deeper into the life of the authors of the NT. ³Write a biographical sketch of each writer.

Practice

- Read through the NT in a year
- Read the NT in a month
- Read a book of the NT a Day

Teach

Rehearse to someone a “snapshot life summary” of each of the authors of the New Testament (making note of their past and growth in Christ).