

New Testament Life and Times

Leander Church of Christ

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Notes at <https://ClassNotes.LeanderChurch.org>

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah...

Prior Slide Thoughts

- What is the source of this quote?
- What version?
- What other book did he write?
 - In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive.

So many others have tried their hand at putting together a story of the wonderful harvest of Scripture and history that took place among us, using reports handed down by the original eyewitnesses who served this Word with their very lives. Since I have investigated all the reports in close detail, starting from the story's beginning, I decided to write it all out for you, most honorable Theophilus, so you can know beyond the shadow of a doubt the reliability of what you were taught.

During the rule of Herod, King of Judea, there was a priest...

Prior Slide Thoughts

- What is the source of this quote?
- What version?
- “... putting together _____” ?
- Objectional words or concepts?
- Why didn't he say, “God told me to write these words.”?

Material Sources, Books, etc.

Primary Source Authors

- N. T. Wright / Michael Bird (esp. New Testament in its World 'NTiiW')
- Ray Vander Laan (various seminars and events)

• Other Sources/Authors

- John Eldredge (EPIC)
- Mark Moore (“How to interpret the Bible”)

Class Plan, 11/8/2020

- **Prayer**
- **Scriptures**
- **Sources, Books, etc.**
- **What is the Bible?**
- **Preface Quote**
- **Different Books (video)**
- **Why the New Testament?**
- **EPIC (context of NT, video)**
- **RVL (East/West)**
- **Closing Thoughts**

What is the Bible?

- **What would be your response were I to tell you...**
 - **“THE BIBLE IS JUST A STORY.” ?**
- **What is your response to...**
 - **“THE BIBLE IS HIS STORY.” ?**
- **What is the difference between Myth and Story?**

NTiiW Preface

The New Testament might only be a small book, but it is a strange and powerful book. At one level, it tells the history of Jesus and the early church; at another level (and these two go closely together, as we shall see) it is regarded by churches around the world as inspired scripture, normative for the life of faith. For this to become a reality, for the New Testament to come alive, each generation of readers, and especially teachers and preachers, needs help, particularly in the form of thorough, user-friendly, and creative introductions to Jesus, his first followers, and the literature that emerged from that movement. **That is what this book is hoping to provide.**

Different Kinds of Books

The New Testament *is* history *and* literature *and* theology, all at once, and we should not try to reduce it to any one of these at the expense of the others.

Video -- [NTiiW v01 0000-0606](#)

(Come up on stage; your part in the play.)

Web Video Version -- [NTLaT 201108 Web 10](#)

NtiiW – 1 Beginning Study of the New Testament

WHY THE NEW TESTAMENT?

The New Testament, in other words, isn't there to tell us simply 'how to get to heaven'. Indeed, to the surprise of many people, that isn't what it's saying at all. That's why some theories about the New Testament and its authority don't work as well as they should. If you try to read it as a 'how-to' book, which sadly is how some people approach it, you may end up frustrated, thinking it would be better if the spirit had given us something more like a car manual or a railway timetable. No: the **New Testament is designed to draw us into the story** of God's plan, to rescue the world from chaos and idolatry and to launch his new transformative creation.

EPIC

- Repeated references in text and video to The Story, or The Play.
- Author John Eldredge (among others) also emphasizes this view of the Bible.
 - Four videos in six minutes:
 - [EPIC 02 0135– Life is a Story](#)
 - [EPIC 02 0312 – Grandfather, Okinawa](#)
 - [EPIC 02 0444 – Need to know the rest of the story](#)
 - [EPIC 02 1157 – We live in story](#)

Web Versions:

- [NTLaT 201108 Web 020](#)
- [NTLaT 201108 Web 030](#)
- [NTLaT 201108 Web 040](#)
- [NTLaT 201108 Web 050](#)

Ray Vander Laan makes similar points

- RVL – Who is he?
- Invitation to see the frogs
 - Male or Female?
 - When did it become impossible to know which frog was his girl[frog]friend?
 - What was impossible to know until it was removed from the pond?
 - Truth in both methods, i.e., Observation vs. Propositional
- Bible
 - Take a sentence out of the Bible, out of a particular book, culture, history, disregard the type of literature it is – and some parts of its meaning become impossible to know.

RVL -- 2

- The WEST prefers a Rational Concept, Propositional Truth, and Definitions. The EAST prefers story, metaphor, word pictures, etc., to describe Truth.
- EXERCISE
 - Finish this sentence: GOD IS _____.
 - In Israel you may see a Christian or Muslim classroom, or a Jewish hiking group. Stop and ask them. GOD IS ??????

Typical Responses to: “God is _____.”

| Western Culture | Middle Eastern Culture |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Love | Bread of Life |
| Omnipotent | My Shepherd |
| Holy | Shade in the Desert |
| Faithful | A Fortress |
| Eternal | Living Water |
| Majestic | Eagle’s Wings |
| Good | A Rock |

Closing Thoughts (1 of 2)

The relevance of this for our historical enquiry into the New Testament is that we find ourselves describing a certain group of first-century Jews, namely the 'early Christians', who held one particular variant of the first-century Jewish worldview. This strange group was saying in effect, 'The hope which characterizes our worldview has been fulfilled in these events.' And they chose to say this in the most natural and most obviously Jewish way they knew, **by telling a story...**

Closing Thoughts (2 of 2)

“...an informed reading of the New Testament, especially for a believing audience, will involve pursuing three main questions. First, the historical one: how did Christianity begin, and why did it take the shape that it did? Second, the literary one: why did the early Jesus-followers write the way they did, and what does this tell us about their worldview? Third, the theological question: what did the early Christians believe about God and the world, and about humans in general and Jesus in particular within that, and what kind of sense might their beliefs make? This volume will not answer all those questions in full. But, as we survey the New Testament writings, the present book offers a first guiding step on how to think about them.”