

LESSON 2

THE BIBLE: THE NEW TESTAMENT

In our last lesson, we learned that the Bible is a collection of books. It is divided into two parts: the _____ Testament and the _____ Testament. We learned a little bit about how the Old Testament is used in the Church and how it contains different kinds of writing: law, history, prophecy and wisdom or spiritual literature.

The New Testament contains the Gospels, history, letters, and prophecy. The **Gospels** of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John describe the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The Acts of the Apostles gives the **history** of the Church and its growth and tells of the journeys of St. Paul. St. Paul was the author of many of the Epistles. The Epistles are **letters** written to the different Churches to help them as they spread the news of Christ. We see **prophecy** in the book of Revelation which is also a series of letters written to specific Churches about the final triumph of the Kingdom of God.

The Gospel, which means "good news," is a very important part of the Bible in our Church. The Gospel is the first four books of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The Gospel is so important that before the priest reads it, he tells us to pay attention by saying, "Wisdom, let us attend." The Gospel is bound in gold and kept on the altar. The priest carries it during the Little Entrance, and then raises it over his head before walking through the Holy Doors and placing it back on the altar.

The authors of the Gospel were Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They are called the four evangelists which means "preacher of God's word." You will usually find the four evangelists on the Holy Doors. Each of these men were very different and each had different ways of telling about the life of Jesus. Who were these men?

Matthew: This writer was an apostle. He was a hated tax collector before he followed Jesus. He wrote to the Jewish people in this Gospel, telling them Jesus was the Savior they had been waiting for.

Mark: Although Mark was not an apostle, he was a secretary and student of St. Peter, who was one of the twelve apostles. He wrote to the Gentiles and pagans who became Christian. He gave a short, correct account of the life of Jesus.

Luke: Luke was one of the 70 disciples of Jesus. He was a Greek doctor of medicine and was highly educated. He also was an icon "writer" or iconographer. He wrote his gospel and also the book of **Acts of the Apostles** to one man, Theophilus, a wealthy citizen of Antioch who had become a Christian.

John: John was the youngest apostle. He was the beloved apostle and was very close to Jesus. At the crucifixion, Jesus asked John to watch over Mary, His Mother. He lived to be very old. He is also the author of some of the Epistles as well as the book of Revelations.

Read the following account of the baptism of Jesus Christ to see similarities and differences. Answer the questions that follow to see what each writer thought was important.

Circle the words spoken by **God the Father** in each gospel. Underline the action of **God the Holy Spirit** in each gospel. Put a box around the name of **God the Son** in each gospel.

Matthew 3:13–17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying "I need to be baptized by you and you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.

And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him: and lo, a voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Mark 1:9–11

In those days, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven. "Thou art my beloved Son; with whom I am well pleased."

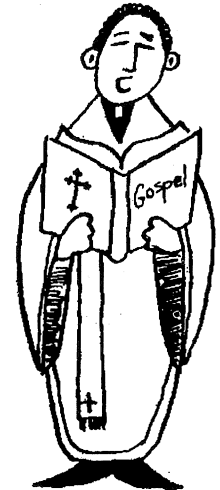
Luke 3:21–23

Now when all the people were baptized and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven. "Thou art my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

John 1:29–35

The next day, he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, for he was before me.' I myself did not know him; but for this I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel."

And John bore witness, "I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him; but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."



Who was the Evangelist who mentioned the conversation between John and Jesus?

Who was the Evangelist who explained how John the Baptist recognized Jesus?

Who was the Evangelist who mentioned Jesus was fulfilling that which was right for the Jews of the Old Testament?

Which two Evangelists gave short, simple descriptions of the baptism?

In every Divine Liturgy, we hear readings from the Gospel and Epistles. Look up today's Gospel reading and write about it.

_____ : _____ Today's gospel was about

Look up today's Epistle reading and write about it.

_____ : _____ Today's epistle was about

In our last lesson, we also learned that many books of the Bible have the same name. They use numbers in front of the name to tell them apart. We say "First Timothy" for 1 Timothy. Find one name that appears four times in the New Testament. _____

Write the books of the New Testament that use that name. Put a star beside the book that is one of the Gospels. What are the other three books?

Note to Parents:

Try to read the Epistle and Gospel readings before Divine Liturgy each Sunday. Encourage your children to listen for key words and phrases. Discuss with children after church.