



How Did the New Testament Reach Us?

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On descending to Heaven, the Lord commanded His disciples saying:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19)

The Lord Jesus Christ also said to them: “Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endowed with power from on High.” (Luke 24:49) Thus, they stayed for ten days in the house of St. Mark the Apostle with one accord, until the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them on the day of Pentecost in the form of a great, rushing mighty wind, forked tongues, and numerous languages (Acts 2). Three thousand souls believed in the Lord Jesus Christ that day. This comprised the seed of the Christian Church.

Following this, the Apostles reached out to the world, in the same order that the Lord had appointed to them: Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria, to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8). Thus, Christianity spread quickly in the various parts of the world during the first century A.D.

Initially, the Holy Gospel of Good News was oral. The Apostles preached, people believed, and some of the believers became preachers who traveled throughout the world. Believers, however, started to feel their need for two types of writing: 1) One to preserve for the present and the future the biography of the Lord Jesus Christ, and 2) Another to answer the questions and inquiries that reached them from their children in the different churches, to solve problems that they faced, or to refute the heresies that arose among them.

Therefore, with these needs in mind, the Apostles began writing through the Holy Spirit the four Holy Gospels. The first Holy Gospel is written by St. Matthew. St. Matthew wrote it for the Jews who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ in order to explain to them that He is the Messiah in whom all prophecies are fulfilled.

The second Holy Gospel is written by St. Mark. St. Mark wrote it for the Romans, the men of war, in order to reveal to them that the Lord Jesus Christ is the powerful minister to the needs of humanity. The third Holy Gospel is written by St. Luke. St. Luke wrote it for the Greeks,



the men of wisdom and philosophy, to show them that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of Man who will deliver man from all his problems and will open for him the gates to eternity.

The fourth Holy Gospel is written by St. John. St. John wrote it in order to reply to the heresies that tried to refute the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. He addressed his Holy Gospel of St. John to the world as a whole.

St. Luke also authored the Acts of the Apostles to his friend, Theophilus, so as to continue to his talk with him. For after telling him in the Holy Gospel about the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, he started to explain to him how the Apostles preached to the whole world, exactly as the Lord Jesus Christ had asked them to do, and with the help of the Holy Spirit.

During the preaching and teaching of the twelve Apostles, they faced many questions, varying problems, and heresies that threatened the soundness of faith. As a response to the many quandaries they started to reply to these matters in the Holy Epistles directed to the churches, to people, or to priests in order to explain to them the basics of Christian faith and to warn them from fated heresies. St. Paul wrote to the Galatians in 49 A.D. in order to deal with their reversion to the Jewish law.

In 53 A.D., he wrote to the Thessalonians in order to explain to the believers the meaning of expecting the Lord's Second Coming, as some had left jobs, waiting for this event. Around 58 A.D., he wrote to the Romans and Corinthians to explain to the believers the meaning of justification through active faith and to correct the numerous faults found in the Corinthians such as division and the abuse of gifts.

Next, St. Paul authored four Holy Epistles known as "captivity epistles." He wrote them while he was a prisoner in Rome in the years 62-64 A.D. These are the Holy Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and to Philemon; and they are wonderful Pastoral Epistles.

Thus, we find each Holy Epistle has a lovely story and a noble aim. Some of the Holy Epistles are purely instructive while others are pastoral or personal. Therefore, we must have an idea about the circumstances under which each Holy Epistle was written before studying any of the fourteen epistles.

The Holy Book of Revelation was written by St. John the Beloved while he was exiled to the Island of Patmos by the tyrannical emperor Dometian who, at seeing that throwing the saint in boiling oil had no effect upon him, thought that by exiling him to Patmos could get rid of him and his influence on his children in Asia Minor. The Lord, however, revealed Himself to St. John in order to encourage him and his children in their tribulation, assuring him that victory is at hand and that he is undoubtedly coming. It goes without saying that St. John wrote the Holy Book of Revelation in a symbolical style in the form of codes that cannot be unraveled except by those he sent them to so as to avoid the fierce anger of the pagans.

In summary, the twenty seven Holy Books of the New Testament were completed. However, they were scattered along a very wide region: The Epistle to the Romans was in Rome, the Epistle to the Colossians in Colossi and he Epistle of the Thessalonians in Greece. For this reason, after the persecution of the Jews and pagans was over, the church started to collect these Holy Books. Undoubtedly, this work needed ample time because of the difficulty of transportation at that time. We notice that while the Holy Gospel of St. John was written towards the close of the first century, collecting the other Holy Books started during the second century. Moreover, there had been a very accurate examination of all the Holy Books that reached the Church, lest the Jews, pagans, or heretics would corrupt the Orthodox faith.

This is how the Church has collected the Holy Books of the New Testament, approved them and handed them over to us in One Book.

Glory be to God, forever. ✠