

To the Teacher

The information below is to help you in teaching the lesson. DO NOT read this page to the students. Instead, teach the information in your own words. Be sure to finish the student's lesson as well. The Scripture references in parentheses are for additional study, to round out the information given in the lesson. Become familiar with these passages as well, to provide additional Scriptures to your students.

Lesson 33 – The Writing of the New Testament (Teacher's Lesson)

Study Notes:

Epistle

Because many of the epistles are easy to understand, we sometimes tend to study only the “problematic” texts carefully – that is, the texts that do not seem to agree with our preconceptions. Teach your students to study responsibly and not to take things lightly. Try to draw out the meaning of the text, not read what we want it to say.

1. Love one another (1 John 4:7).
2. Teach slaves to be subject to their masters (Titus 2:9).
3. Women should cover their heads while they pray (1 Corinthians 11:5-6).
4. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong (1 Thessalonians 5:15).

Gospels

Sometimes events and certain teachings of Jesus that arranged or recorded differently in different translations of the Gospels can confuse Bible students. Remind your students that each author had a different audience and a different purpose for writing. The omission, addition or rearrangement of certain small details does not detract from the historical reliability of the Gospels.

1. “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35)
2. “I Am the resurrection and the life.” (John 11:25)
3. “He who is not with Me, is against Me.” (Matthew 12:30)
4. “Look, I stand at the door and knock.” (Revelation 3:20)

History

While churches today attempt to be “The New Testament Church,” we must understand that the church in Acts existed in a very different culture than the church today. We must follow the pattern given in the first century church in which they committed themselves one to another to reach a lost world. We must strive and adapt to the culture without conforming to it, as they did.

1. “Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so, he was added to the eleven apostles.” (Acts 1:26)
 - In reality, some have wondered if this method of choosing a replacement for Judas was justified even in the apostle's day. There are some who say that Paul should

have been the replacement disciple, but that the church was impatient. Suffice it to say that choosing church leadership requires much meditation and prayer.

2. “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” (Acts 2:41)

- All the time and everywhere, the church must be focused on winning the lost.

3. “All the believers were together and had everything in common.” (Acts 2:44)

- Some have used this verse to support their belief that Christians should form a communist society. The principle behind this is the truth that Christians should share their material possessions all the time and everywhere because they are blessings from God.

4. “Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 8:17)

- Some use this verse to support their belief of a “second blessing” of the Holy Spirit who comes later in the life of a convert. In context, this was most likely a sign to the Jewish leaders that they should accept Gentiles converting to Christianity.

Parable

A good rule of thumb for interpreting parables is to stick to the main point. Attempting to assign meanings to each character in a parable, or stretching the analogies beyond the point can result in a skewed interpretation.

1. Luke 15:8-10 A. God diligently seeks the lost.
2. Matthew 18:23-34 B. Christians should forgive without limits.
3. Luke 16:19-31 C. Trust in Christ while you still have time.
4. Matthew 13:24-30 D. God will separate believers from non-believers in the final judgement.

Prophecy

There are several important perspectives in Revelation. There is not enough space to talk about the merits of each one. The important thing to remember when studying Revelation is to consider the “big picture.” Remember that a book, which only had relevance to a future generation, would have be of little help to the church under persecution in Juan’s day. Try to read the book in its original context when you study.

1. Nero Caesar
2. Adolf Hitler

3. Mikhail Gorbachev
4. Saddam Hussein

Lesson 33 – The Writing of the New Testament

Just like the Old Testament, the New Testament is made up of many different types of literature. Some examples of the main types, along with guidelines for interpretation, are provided below.

Epistle

An epistle is basically a letter. In general, they are simple and straightforward. The difficulty we usually have is not in understanding what these letters say, but putting them into practice. However, some passages are complex and difficult to understand or apply. Some helpful guidelines when interpreting the epistles are:

1. Remember that they were written to a specific audience for a specific purpose. A passage cannot mean what it could never have meant to the author or readers.
2. When you are unsure about problems in the passage, determine what you can safely say about the passage and what is possible but uncertain.
3. Read and carefully interpret with all the text, not just parts that are “problems” for you.

Some teachings are directly applicable to today’s context, while others require us dig a little deeper to find the modern application. Circle the verses below that you think are directly applicable today, underline the ones that are not, and leave the ones you are not sure about.

1. Love one another (1 John 4:7).
2. Teach slaves to be subject to their masters (Titus 2:9).
3. Women should cover their heads while they pray (1 Corinthians 11:5-6).
4. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong (1 Thessalonians 5:15).

Some examples of Epistles are:

1 and 2 Corinthians
Galatians

1 and 2 Thessalonians
1, 2, and 3 John

Gospel

The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are unique forms. They contain narratives of the life of Jesus, but they also contain His teachings, so they are neither absolutely history nor absolutely epistle, but a hybrid of both. To help you understand and interpret the Gospels, here are some guidelines:

1. Learn to read the Gospels in comparison to the others. Many Bibles will give the verses from parallel accounts of the same event. Sometimes reading these parallel accounts can give us a deeper insight that is not possible with just reading one.
2. Understand that each author wrote to a different audience and so certain changes in the arrangement of the material or the order of words can occur. Try to understand the author’s point to his audience, as well as how the historical context of the noted event.

Test your knowledge of the Gospel! Put a check mark (✓) next to each statement below that is one of Jesus' teachings that is also found in one of the four Gospels.

1. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." _____
2. "I Am the resurrection and the life." _____
3. "He who is not with Me, is against Me." _____
4. "Look, I stand at the door and knock." _____

History

When we talk about history of the New Testament, we are mainly talking about the book of Acts. There is historical information throughout other New Testament books, especially in the Gospels, but Acts was specifically written as an historical record of the growth of the first church. Here are some guidelines for the interpretation of the book of Acts:

1. The main focus of Acts is the story of the growth of the first church. It does not prescribe a rigid rule of worship styles, church government, or other such matters. However, it provides us a model of the spirit of what the church should be like.
2. As will all narrative, the author (Luke, under the direction of the Holy Spirit) gives us all of the necessary information, but not necessarily all the information we want. Do not try to read our current context back into the text.
3. Much depth of study can be found by comparing the events in Acts with the Epistles. Very often, Paul writes a letter to a church that has its beginning founded in the book of Acts (i.e. Corinth) A good Biblical Atlas can be helpful in this regard as well.

Look at the following examples of the life of the church set out in the book of Acts and underline the ones that you think apply to the church all the time and everywhere.

1. "Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so, he was added to the eleven apostles." (Acts 1:26)
2. "Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day." (Acts 2:41)
3. "All the believers were together and had everything in common." (Acts 2:44)
4. "Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit." (Acts 8:17)

Parable

Although the parables are found in the Gospels, they are unique enough to merit special consideration. Parables are often misunderstood because they suffer from "over interpretation." To help you in your study, here are some guidelines for the interpretation of parables:

1. Parables are not "secret stories" with hidden meanings. They are designed to evoke a response from their listeners.
2. Know to whom Jesus spoke to when He told a parable, and the result of their reactions.

Read each one of the following parables and see if you can match the “point” with the parable below:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. Lucas 15:8-10 | A. Trust in Christ while you still have time. |
| 2. Mateo 18:23-34 | B. Christians should forgive without limits. |
| 3. Lucas 16:19-31 | C. God diligently seeks the lost. |
| 4. Mateo 13:24-30 | D. God will separate believers from non-believers in the final judgement. |

Some examples of parables are:

Matthew 13:1-23

Luke 10:25-37

Matthew 25:1-13

Luke 15:11-32

Prophecy

Prophecy in the New Testament is the book of Revelation. Actually, this book is a mixture of prophecy, letter, and revelation – a type of literature similar to the writing in the book of Daniel. Apocalyptic literature uses a lot of symbolism and language with “hidden” meanings. This makes interpretation much more difficult. To aid your study of Revelation, here are some guidelines:

1. Study this book with a great humility. Revelation speaks with certainty about Christ’s final victory over Satan, but it tells this story in symbolism. The specifics of this victory are indeterminate.
2. Remember that this book was written to specific first century churches living under persecution. To understand the Word for us, we must first understand the Word that this book spoke to those churches.
3. Do not attempt to “read into” the text or assign names and dates to the figures and events in the book. God will bring the fulfilment in His own time and in His own way.

People are fascinated with assigning current events and personalities to the figures in Revelation. Underline the names below that have been identified with the “beast” of Revelation 13.

1. Nero Caesar
2. Adolf Hitler

3. Mikhail Gorbachev
4. Saddam Hussein

Scripture to memorize:

Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. Matthew 7:24