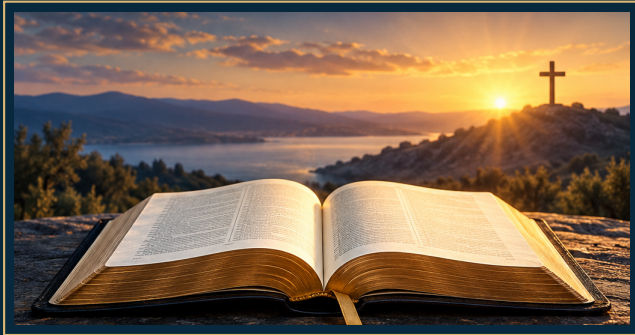


THEOS TRANSFORMING MINISTRIES LIBRARY

INTRODUCTION TO THE

NEW TESTAMENT SIMPLIFIED

A clear guide to all 27 books



From Matthew to Revelation

SENTABA RONALD SALONGO

BIBLICAL TEACHING FOR EVERY GENERATION

THEOS TRANSFORMING MINISTRIES LIBRARY

Introduction to the New Testament Simplified

A clear guide to all 27 books

Ssentaba Ronald Salongo

2026 First Edition

Publication details

Introduction to the New Testament Simplified

A clear guide to all 27 books

Ssentaba Ronald Salongo

Theos Transforming Ministries Library

2026 First Edition

Copyright © 2026 Ssentaba Ronald Salongo. All rights reserved.

Bible references invite readers to consult a complete Bible. Most teaching is original paraphrase; brief biblical phrases may be compared with the King James Version.

The acknowledged Harvest Bible University course is a separate resource credited to its lecturer, Mr. Omondi Geoffrey. No institutional endorsement is implied.

Contents

Introduction.....	6
How to use this book.....	10
1 The New Testament: its books, world, and message.....	12
2 Reading and comparing the four Gospels.....	18
3 Matthew: the promised King and His kingdom.....	28
4 Mark: the serving Son and the way of the cross.....	40
5 Luke: the Saviour and His life of mercy.....	48
6 John: the Son, His signs, and His I Am sayings.....	57
7 John: the final evening and the promise of the Spirit.....	67
8 The cross, resurrection, and ascension.....	71
9 Jesus' teaching and the New Testament's main doctrines.....	76
10 Acts: the church and the widening mission.....	83
11 Acts: journeys, suffering, and witness in Rome.....	93
12 Paul: called by grace and sent to the nations.....	102
13 Romans and Galatians: grace and faith.....	106
14 Corinthians: the gospel in a troubled church.....	110
15 The prison letters: Christ, unity, joy, and reconciliation.....	113
16 Thessalonians and the pastoral letters: hope and faithful care.....	118
17 Hebrews and James: persevering faith.....	124
18 Peter and Jude: hope, holiness, and discernment.....	127
19 John's letters: truth, love, and assurance.....	131
20 Revelation: the Lamb, faithful witness, and new creation.....	135
Living the New Testament together.....	143
Reading guides and reference tables.....	151
Glossary.....	160
Sources and further reading.....	163
About the author.....	166

Dedication

To my wife Josephine, our children, my mother Georgina Mwebe, and the coming generation. May knowing Jesus Christ shape the way we love, serve, and live.

Acknowledgments

I acknowledge the teaching received through Harvest Bible University and the contribution of Mr. Omondi Geoffrey, whose course material on the Gospels and Acts helped identify important subjects for this study. I also acknowledge Harvest Teaching Ministries and the teachers who encourage believers to read Scripture carefully. This book develops fresh explanations and applications around the biblical texts; the course manuscript remains a distinct teaching resource with its own lecturer's credit.

Above all, I give thanks to God for the witness of Scripture and the people through whom its message reaches families, congregations, and future teachers. Every reader is encouraged to keep an open Bible beside this handbook. The biblical text is the primary reading; the explanations here are companions to that reading.

Introduction

A child may ask, “Who is Jesus?” An adult may ask, “How can I understand the whole New Testament without getting lost?” These questions belong together. The New Testament announces who Jesus Christ is, what He has done for our salvation, and how people who belong to Him are called to live. This handbook opens that message in simple language. Its purpose is to help a reader move from recognising the names of biblical books to understanding their message.

The New Testament contains twenty-seven books, not twenty-eight. They form a small library within the Bible: four Gospels, one account of the church’s early mission, twenty-one letters, and Revelation. Matthew has twenty-eight chapters; the number of its chapters should not be confused with the number of New Testament books. The usual English chapter numbering gives the New Testament 260 chapters. Chapter and verse numbers are finding tools added after the books were written. They help us locate passages, but a sentence still belongs to its surrounding paragraph and story.

“Testament” is connected with covenant. A covenant is a relationship established with promises and responsibilities. Jeremiah promised a new covenant involving forgiveness and God’s instruction written upon the heart (Jeremiah 31:31–34). At the final meal with His disciples, Jesus connected the new covenant with His coming death (Luke 22:20). The New Testament therefore concerns more than the later pages of a large book. It announces God’s saving relationship with His people through Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament remains the necessary beginning of this story. Creation explains why the world and human life matter. Sin explains our need for rescue. God's promises to Abraham point toward blessing for the nations. The exodus, sacrifice, priesthood, kingdom, prophets, and hope of restoration prepare readers to understand the language surrounding Jesus. The New Testament does not introduce a different Creator or a rival God. It presents the fulfilment of God's saving purpose, while teaching us to read the earlier Scriptures with care.

Jesus stands at the centre. He is the eternal Son who became truly human. He taught, loved, served, confronted evil, suffered, died for sins, and rose bodily from the dead. His saving work is the foundation of the apostles' message. We do not study His teaching as though His identity were unimportant, or celebrate His identity while ignoring His commands. The Lord who offers forgiveness also teaches us to forgive; the King who gives life calls us to follow Him. The Gospels are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. "Gospel" means good news. Each writer presents Jesus with particular emphases, selecting and arranging material to communicate truth. Matthew repeatedly connects Him with Israel's Scriptures. Mark highlights authority, service, suffering, and the demands of discipleship. Luke draws attention to saving mercy, prayer, the Holy Spirit, and the welcome of people often pushed aside. John calls readers to believe in the Son and receive life in His name. All four tell of the same Lord. Their differences invite careful reading rather than immediate suspicion or careless attempts to make every detail identical.

Acts continues the narrative associated with Luke. The risen Jesus commissions His witnesses, the Holy Spirit

empowers them, and the message moves outward from Jerusalem. We meet Peter, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, Paul, and many others. This is a story of preaching and prayer, but also of shared meals, practical care, disagreement, persecution, travel, and patient teaching. The church grows among real people with real weaknesses. God's work does not depend on pretending that His servants never needed correction.

The letters explain the gospel and address the life of believers. Some are written to churches; others address named coworkers or households. They teach about salvation, the church, the Spirit, worship, family life, work, suffering, leadership, truth, and hope. Their setting matters. A reply to a particular church problem should be understood before it is applied to a different situation. At the same time, these letters belong to Christian Scripture and continue to instruct the wider church.

Paul deserves careful attention because of his calling to proclaim Christ among the Gentiles, the nations beyond the Jewish people (Romans 11:13; Galatians 1:15–16). He had persecuted the church before encountering the risen Lord. Grace redirected his life into mission, service, and suffering. Thirteen New Testament letters bear his name. We will introduce every one, distinguish their settings, and explain their central teaching. Paul's mission does not replace Jesus' gospel with another message. He proclaims the crucified and risen Christ and teaches the life that follows from belonging to Him.

Other letters help us hear the wider apostolic witness. Hebrews presents Jesus as the great High Priest and sufficient sacrifice. James calls for faith expressed in action. Peter's letters teach hope, holiness, discernment,

and perseverance. John's letters connect truth about Jesus with obedience and love. Jude urges believers to remain faithful amid corrupt teaching. These voices belong together without having to sound identical in every sentence.

Revelation completes the collection with the revelation of Jesus Christ. It was addressed to actual churches and uses visions, symbols, prophecy, and worship to call them to faithfulness. Its central figure is the victorious Lamb. Judgment is real, evil does not have the final word, and God promises a new creation in which His people dwell with Him. We will explain its major movements and Old Testament connections. Where Christians disagree about the order or timing of events, we will identify the difference without allowing a disputed timetable to hide the book's call to worship and endurance.

The books arose in the world of the first-century Roman Empire. Their surviving texts are written in Greek, while Jesus' Jewish setting also involved Aramaic and Hebrew. Roads, cities, sea routes, synagogues, households, and marketplaces formed the setting of early Christian mission. Many readers date the collection broadly from the middle to the end of the first century. Some books have competing proposals reaching earlier or later, including into the early second century. These dates are historical judgments, not dates printed on every biblical title page. A date for an event is also different from the date when an account of it was composed.

We will explain the main areas of New Testament doctrine. Doctrine means teaching. These include God, the Trinity, Jesus' deity and humanity, Scripture, sin, salvation, the Holy Spirit, the church, Christian conduct,

resurrection, judgment, and the coming kingdom. A short handbook cannot discuss every theological dispute exhaustively. It can give readers a clear map, explain the principal passages, and show how to continue studying. Difficult words will be defined when they first become necessary.

Every biblical book receives an introduction, background, authorship and date information, suggested key passages, purpose, a simple outline, its main message, attention to Christ and the Trinity, and a practical response. Related books share a chapter so that the volume remains manageable. A young reader can begin with the simple summary. An adult can follow the references and compare the explanations with the complete biblical text.

Keep an open Bible beside this book. Read the passage first, then the explanation, and return to Scripture afterwards. The aim is understanding that becomes faith, love, prayer, truthfulness, mercy, and faithful service. We want to know the Christ whom these books proclaim and learn to follow Him in ordinary life.

How to use this book

Begin with the whole New Testament map, then read the introduction to the biblical book you are studying. Read its key passages in your Bible before reading the explanation. A suggested key passage is a study aid, not the claim that a book has only one important verse. Every biblical book has its own marked study even where several share a chapter.

For a child, begin with the simple summary and retell one story or lesson. For an adult, follow the outline and

compare the references. Reflection questions invite conversation rather than an examination. Explain unfamiliar words patiently and allow honest questions. Read a complete Gospel and Acts, then continue through the letters and Revelation. The reading pathways at the end offer a manageable beginning.

Dates are approximate. A traditional identification, a statement in a biblical text, and a scholarly proposal are identified as different kinds of information. The authorship discussions help readers speak accurately; they should not distract from hearing the books themselves. BC and AD refer to the conventional historical calendar, with AD dates used for the New Testament period.

Most teaching is original explanation and paraphrase. Short biblical phrases are identified by their references and may be compared with the King James Version. Use a complete Bible and consult its manuscript notes where relevant. The acknowledgments preserve the contribution of the earlier Gospels and Acts course, while the expanded studies cover the wider New Testament.

Chapter 1

The New Testament: its books, world, and message

The 27 books at a glance

The order below is the usual order in an English New Testament. It is not a chronological publication list. The chapter column points to this handbook; the biblical chapter count appears separately.

Biblical book	Chapters	Study chapter	Key passage
Matthew	28	3	Matthew 28:18–20
Mark	16	4	Mark 10:45
Luke	24	5	Luke 19:10
John	21	6	John 20:30–31
Acts	28	10	Acts 1:8
Romans	16	13	Romans 1:16–17
1 Corinthians	16	14	1 Corinthians 15:1–8
2 Corinthians	13	14	2 Corinthians 5:17–21
Galatians	6	13	Galatians 5:13–26
Ephesians	6	15	Ephesians 2:8–22
Philippians	4	15	Philippians 2:1–11
Colossians	4	15	Colossians 1:15–20
1 Thessalonians	5	16	1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

Biblical book	Chapters	Study chapter	Key passage
2 Thessalonians	3	16	2 Thessalonians 2:13–17
1 Timothy	6	16	1 Timothy 3:14–16
2 Timothy	4	16	2 Timothy 3:14–17
Titus	3	16	Titus 2:11–14
Philemon	1	15	Philemon 15–18
Hebrews	13	17	Hebrews 4:14–16
James	5	17	James 1:22–27
1 Peter	5	18	1 Peter 1:3–9
2 Peter	3	18	2 Peter 3:17–18
1 John	5	19	1 John 5:11–13
2 John	1	19	2 John 4–6
3 John	1	19	3 John 5–8
Jude	1	18	Jude 20–25
Revelation	22	20	Revelation 21:1–5

The four Gospels contain 89 chapters; Acts has 28; the twenty-one letters contain 121; Revelation has 22. Together these make 27 books and 260 chapters. The letters bearing Paul's name number thirteen; Hebrews is counted separately, because its writer is not named. General or catholic letters means letters addressed to the wider church; "catholic" in this classification means universal. Revelation is apocalyptic prophecy, not a book of the Apocrypha.

The New Testament and its world

Read: Jeremiah 31:31–34; Luke 1:1–4; Luke 22:14–20; Acts 1:1–8.

Main truth: The New Testament announces God’s saving work in Jesus within the unfolding story of Scripture.

What New Testament means

Testament is a traditional name related to covenant. A covenant is a relationship established with promises and responsibilities. Jesus connects His coming death with the new covenant at the Last Supper. Jeremiah had promised forgiveness and God’s law written within His people. The New Testament presents Jesus as bringing this saving promise to fulfilment. Its name therefore directs us toward a relationship with God, not merely toward the later pages of a library.

The New Testament contains twenty-seven books: four Gospels, Acts, twenty-one letters, and Revelation. Thirteen letters bear Paul’s name; eight others are commonly grouped as general letters, including Hebrews. Hebrews does not name its author, so we should not assign it to Paul merely to obtain a preferred number. Revelation is apocalyptic prophecy, which uses visions and symbols to disclose God’s rule. Apocalyptic and apocryphal are different words.

The Old Testament remains necessary. Creation, covenant, Passover, sacrifice, kingdom, temple, exile, and restoration form the world in which the good news is announced. Jesus does not appear as a stranger to the story of Israel. At the same time, fulfilment does not mean that every earlier detail is a secret prediction. We will attend to direct

quotations, repeated patterns, and the explanations given by the New Testament writers themselves.

Life under Rome

Rome provided the broad political setting of the Gospels and Acts. Local kings, governors, soldiers, tax systems, and courts affected ordinary life. Roman roads and shared networks later helped travellers move across the Mediterranean world. These conditions did not make empire morally innocent: military force, exploitation, and slavery also belonged to that world. Christian mission used available routes while proclaiming a Lord whose authority exceeded imperial power.

Do not confuse the rulers named Herod. Herod the Great belongs to Matthew's infancy narrative. Herod Antipas appears during Jesus' public ministry and in the account of John the Baptist's death. Acts later names other members of the ruling family. A shared family name does not mean that every reference describes the same man. Ask which ruler is present and what the passage actually says about his office.

The Jewish world was diverse. Pharisees were associated with careful observance and interpretation of the law; Sadducees were connected with influential priestly circles and rejected resurrection. Not every Jewish person belonged to either group. Jesus and His earliest disciples were Jewish. His conflicts with particular leaders must never become a reason to condemn all Jewish people, then or now.

Temple synagogue and language

The Jerusalem temple was the central sanctuary of Israel's sacrificial worship. A synagogue was a gathering place or assembly for communal religious life, Scripture reading, prayer, and teaching. These institutions were related but not interchangeable. Acts shows believers teaching in temple courts and synagogues while also meeting in homes. The early Christian movement arose within this setting before developing communities across many regions.

Most New Testament books were written in Greek. Aramaic was important in the world of Jesus, Hebrew remained significant in Jewish Scripture and learning, and Latin belonged especially to Roman administration. Knowing that several languages were present prevents careless claims that a particular figure must have spoken only one language. It also helps explain why biblical names and Old Testament quotations sometimes appear in different forms.

History serving faith

Historical background helps us understand a text, but it should be used carefully. We should not confidently announce an exact year when the evidence only supports a range. The New Testament does not provide a complete modern calendar of Jesus' life or Paul's journeys.

Conventional timelines are useful when their uncertainty is admitted. Their purpose is to show relationships among events, not to turn an estimate into a test of faith.

Application: Before explaining a passage, identify its place, people, and situation. A tax collector's encounter

with Jesus becomes clearer when we recognize the social suspicion surrounding his work. A Gentile entering the church becomes clearer when we understand the boundaries the community had assumed. Good background removes confusion and helps the reader hear the message.

Discuss: How does covenant help explain the name New Testament? Why must we distinguish the Herods? How can historical knowledge strengthen rather than replace Bible reading?

Prayer: Father, teach us to receive Your saving work in Jesus with understanding. Help us honour the people and history through whom Your Word has come to us. Amen.

Chapter 2

Reading and comparing the four Gospels

Four Gospels and one Lord

Read: Mark 1:1–15; Luke 1:1–4; John 20:30–31; John 21:24–25.

Main truth: Four distinctive Gospel accounts bear witness to the same Jesus Christ.

Good news and written witness

Gospel means good news. The message announces God's saving action in Jesus: His life, death for sins, resurrection, and lordship. It calls people to repent, believe, and follow Him. Christians also use Gospel as the name of each of the four narrative books. These two uses are related. The books tell the story through which the saving message is made known.

Luke's opening explains that others had already undertaken accounts and that eyewitness testimony had been handed down. Luke does not say that every earlier attempt failed. He explains his own careful work so that Theophilus can understand the reliability of the instruction received. A responsible teacher should resist adding a negative judgment that the prologue does not make.

The Gospels are selective. They are not minute-by-minute diaries, and they do not attempt to record everything Jesus did. Selection is not necessarily distortion. A writer chooses events and arranges material to communicate a truthful account with a particular purpose. We should

therefore ask why a story stands at this point in this Gospel before removing it from its setting to build a combined chronology.

The Synoptic Gospels

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called Synoptic because they can be viewed together and share substantial narrative material. John also tells the story of Jesus, but selects and develops much of his material differently. Synoptic does not mean that the three are identical or that John belongs to another gospel of salvation. The similarities and differences invite careful comparison.

Scholars discuss how the Gospel writers used earlier testimony, oral teaching, and written sources. Many understand Mark as an important source for Matthew and Luke; other proposals exist. The Bible does not provide a statement describing every stage of composition. We can distinguish these scholarly models from the content of the Gospels themselves. A reader can study the finished books well without claiming to settle every question about their literary relationship.

Four helpful emphases

Matthew is often remembered through the picture of Jesus as King, Mark through service, Luke through the Son of Man, and John through the Son of God. These are useful memory aids. They become misleading if we make them exclusive. Mark presents divine authority, Matthew presents costly service, Luke proclaims Jesus' exalted identity, and John records His genuine human grief and death.

Later Christian teachers connected the four Gospels with the living creatures in Ezekiel and Revelation: human, lion, ox, and eagle. Assignments have varied. Those biblical visions do not themselves label the creatures Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Such a comparison may serve as an illustration, but it should not be presented as an explicit biblical explanation of why four Gospels exist. Likewise, symbolic number patterns cannot prove a theory simply because it sounds memorable. Three, four, seven, and forty have important uses in particular passages, but a number does not carry one automatic meaning everywhere. Ask what the writer is doing in the passage. Clear teaching about Jesus should rest on clear textual evidence.

Reading with care

Begin with observation. Who is present? What does Jesus say or do? What response follows? Then consider context. Is this a controversy, a private conversation, a public sign, a parable, or preparation for the cross? Finally ask about application. This order protects us from using a familiar phrase to teach something the scene does not support.

Traditional authorship belongs in the discussion with appropriate wording. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the established names by which Christians receive these books. Their narratives do not include modern author signatures. Early church testimony matters, but it should be distinguished from direct self-identification within a text. The same distinction applies to proposed dates and audiences: a strong Jewish emphasis does not prove that no Gentile reader was intended.

Application: Read one complete Gospel before assembling a harmony. Let its opening, turning points, and conclusion shape your understanding. When comparing passages, write the references side by side and notice both agreement and difference. Do not invent a detail merely to make an answer appear complete.

Discuss: What does Gospel mean? How does Luke describe his work? Why are King, Servant, Son of Man, and Son of God helpful but incomplete summaries?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help us hear the witnesses to Your life with humility and attention. Give us faith that listens carefully and obedience that follows what we learn. Amen.

Comparing the Gospels faithfully

Read: Matthew 9:18–26; Mark 5:21–43; Luke 8:40–56; John 6:1–15.

Main truth: Comparison should help us hear each witness clearly, without flattening differences or inventing certainty.

Shared events and distinct accounts

A Gospel comparison places parallel passages beside one another. A harmony attempts to arrange events into a combined sequence. Both can help, but a harmony remains a reader's reconstruction. It should not replace the literary movement of each book or claim that every event can be assigned a completely certain place in a modern timeline.

Notice how one writer may give a shorter account where another supplies a fuller conversation. A report may name one participant without claiming that no other participant was present. At the same time, not every difficulty

disappears by repeating that explanation. We should examine the actual wording and admit where a precise reconstruction remains uncertain.

The feeding of the five thousand is recorded in all four Gospels. Each places it within a distinct presentation. Comparing the accounts can reveal both shared testimony and a writer’s particular emphasis. We should avoid the opposite mistake of saying that the Gospels merely repeat one another without meaningful differences.

Distinctive material worth recognizing

The following chart gives examples rather than an exhaustive list. Saying an account is distinctive refers to its presence or development in the canonical Gospel accounts, not a claim that no related theme appears anywhere else in Scripture.

Gospel	Examples of distinctive material or treatment
Matthew	Visitors from the east; the flight to Egypt; the unforgiving servant; the workers in the vineyard; the final commission in its Galilean setting
Mark	The seed growing quietly; the healing with fingers and touch in Mark 7:31–37; the gradual healing at Bethsaida in Mark 8:22–26
Luke	The Good Samaritan; the lost coin; the father and two sons; Zacchaeus; the Emmaus journey
John	Cana; Nicodemus; the Samaritan woman; the man born blind; Lazarus; the extended farewell teaching

A preacher may draw an application from a distinctive account while remembering the wider Gospel witness. Luke's mercy does not mean Matthew lacks compassion. John's divine claims do not mean Mark presents only a human teacher. Distinctiveness concerns emphasis and selection, not ownership of one piece of Jesus' identity.

Quotation fulfilment and analogy

A direct quotation repeats or closely echoes an earlier text. An allusion recalls it less explicitly. Typology connects earlier people, events, or institutions with a greater fulfilment. An illustration helps explain a truth through comparison. These categories overlap at times, but distinguishing them helps prevent exaggerated claims.

When Jesus is described through Passover language, the biblical connections should guide the explanation. When a teacher compares Joseph's rejection and later rescue of others with Jesus, the similarity may illuminate the story, but not every detail becomes a prediction. A coloured object or a number is not a type simply because a creative sermon can be built from it.

Read sayings within their scenes

A promise spoken to a particular person may reveal God's character without functioning as an identical promise of circumstances to every reader. Jesus' command to one healed person to go home is not a universal prohibition against travelling ministry. His command to another to follow cannot be reduced to one identical occupational change for everyone.

Likewise, parables frequently depend on surprise, exaggeration, reversal, or a limited comparison. Ask which

question the parable answers and what response it seeks. Do not make its least important furniture carry a doctrine. Jesus sometimes supplies an explanation; where He does, begin there.

Manuscript differences and honest confidence

Copies of ancient texts sometimes differ. Bible footnotes may explain an omitted phrase, a variant reading, or a passage whose location differs among manuscripts. John 7:53–8:11 and Mark 16:9–20 are familiar examples. A footnote is information intended to help the reader, not proof that a publisher secretly dislikes a doctrine.

The story of the woman accused of adultery should not be used without acknowledging its textual history when teaching the passage in detail. Its themes of truthful judgment and mercy can also be considered alongside secure passages elsewhere. No central Christian doctrine should be made to depend entirely on an isolated disputed wording. The whole scriptural witness provides a stronger foundation.

Truthful teaching and uncertainty

Distinguish three kinds of statement: the passage explicitly says this; the context reasonably suggests this; a later tradition proposes this. Using these distinctions is not weak faith. It is truthful speech about evidence. When we do not know a person's exact age, private motives, or later journey, we should avoid filling the space with an invention.

Application: Before teaching a familiar story, read it again and mark details you had remembered from tradition rather than from the text. Keep useful traditions