

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT GLOSSARY

The University of St. Francis

Apocalypse	<i>(n)</i> Literally, the term means “revelation” or “uncovering.” In the New Testament, it refers to the book of Revelation that collects the end-time visions of a man named John and sometimes to the “little apocalypse” in Mark 13.
Apocalyptic	<i>(adj)</i> can be used to describe events and texts that relate to the “revelation” of end-time events. The book of Revelation is an example of an apocalyptic text.
Apostle	<i>(n)</i> an emissary, someone who is sent on behalf of another person to deliver a message or perform a task. Jesus’s closest followers are called apostles because they are appointed to continue his mission of teaching and healing.
Apostolic Succession	<i>(n)</i> refers to the line of Christian authority and teaching that church communities, past and present, trace back to the original apostles of Jesus. Many interpreters see the roots of apostolic succession in scenes of the apostles appointing new emissaries in the Acts of the Apostles or in New Testament letters.
Aramaic	<i>(adj, n)</i> an ancient Semitic language similar to Hebrew, used by Jews in Israel beginning around 535 BCE when Cyrus, king of Persia, permitted Jews to return from the Babylonian Exile. Some phrases in the New Testament are in Aramaic.
Baptism	<i>(n)</i> a ritual act of cleansing or washing in water. For Christians, baptism is performed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and it makes the baptized person a member of the community.

Bishop	(<i>n</i>) English translation of the Greek word <i>episkopos</i> , which means “overseer.” Some letters in the New Testament depict bishops as leaders in local church communities, responsible for activities such as teaching and leading liturgy(public worship).
Canon	(<i>n</i>) comes from the Greek word for “ruler”(as in yardstick), used to refer to a list of books considered authoritative for a particular community. The New Testament canon is sacred for Christians.
Catholic	(<i>adj</i>) comes from the Greek word <i>katholikos</i> , which means universal. The Catholic Letters are New Testament letters written to the universal community of Christ-believers.
Census	(<i>n</i>) an official list documenting all the residents of a particular region, typically used for purposes of taxation and military conscription. The Gospel of Luke mentions an empire-wide census taken by the Romans around the time of Jesus’s birth.
Centurion	(<i>n</i>) A Roman military officer called a centurion was appointed over a group of soldiers called a century, traditionally made up of 100 men.
Christ	(<i>n</i>) This Greek word is the equivalent of the Hebrew term Messiah. Both mean “anointed one” and refer to a figure who was promised as a leader and savior for God’s people. In the New Testament, “Christ” is sometimes used as a proper name for Jesus.
Christmas	(<i>n</i>) In Christian communities, Christmas is a holiday celebrating the birth of Jesus the Christ. The Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke include stories about the nativity or birth.
Christology	(<i>n</i>) formed from two Greek terms(<i>christ-</i> and <i>-ology</i>); means knowledge of or teachings about the Christ(Messiah, anointed one). The New Testament books provide many insights into the Christology of Jesus’s early followers.

Church	(n) comes from the Greek noun <i>ekklēsia</i> , meaning assembly; in New Testament usage comes to mean the group or assembly of Christ-believers. It can refer to small local groups such as household churches or to the Catholic(universal) community; it generally does not refer to a physical building until later.
Crucifixion	(n) was a form of Roman capital punishment that involved being tied or nailed to a cross with arms outstretched. The victim hung in this position until he or she asphyxiated and died.
Deacon	(n) comes from the Greek word <i>diakonos</i> , which means “one who serves.” The Acts of the Apostles and some letters depict deacons as leaders in the Christ-believing communities or churches who are responsible for serving and teaching other members of the community.
Dead Sea Scrolls	(n) This collection of texts originated in a Jewish sect living at Qumran near the Dead Sea. The texts, which include Hebrew Bible material and noncanonical Jewish documents, were discovered in the mid-20th century and have proved to be a rich resource for biblical studies.
Disciple	(n) comes from the Latin word <i>discipulus</i> ; refers to a follower or student. In the New Testament, Jesus calls disciples to learn his message about the kingdom of God and about how to live in community.
Discipleship	(n) a way of life that involves following and learning from a teacher, such as Jesus. New Testament discipleship might lead to suffering or being persecuted.
Doctrine	(n) a formal, authoritative teaching that a given community holds to be true at a particular time. The New Testament contains statements of doctrine for early Christ-believers and many Christians today.

Easter	(n) This Christian feast commemorates the resurrection of Jesus. The founding events of the Easter story are recounted in three canonical gospels and in a number of the New Testament letters.
Eschaton	(n) Greek term referring to the end of time. In the New Testament, the eschaton will be a time of judgment, with rewards for the righteous and punishments for those who have persecuted them.
Eschatology	(n) a worldview or set of beliefs related to the end of time. A related adjective, eschatological, describes events or texts that relate to the end-time.
Essenes	(n) members of a Jewish sect who considered the priesthood and temple cult of their time corrupt and so removed themselves to live in separate communities outside Jerusalem, between the mid-2nd century BCE and 70 CE. Their texts reveal a dualistic and apocalyptic worldview.
Ethics	(n) field of study that seeks to understand what is good and how to pursue and achieve it. Ethics may also describe a specific set or code of behaviors that are thought to be moral in a particular group.
Euangelion	(n) Greek term that is translated as “gospel” but technically means “good news.” It refers to the genre of the four gospels in the New Testament.
Eucharist/Last Supper	(n) Christian ritual, usually part of a liturgical celebration; reenacts the last supper Jesus shared with The Twelve before his Passion, when he identified bread and wine as his body and blood. The term <i>eucharist</i> comes from a Greek root meaning “thanksgiving.”
Evangelist	(n) a technical term for someone who writes a gospel, or <i>euangelion</i> . It can also be used to describe a person who spreads the gospel message orally.

Evangelization	(<i>n</i>) the work of spreading the “good news” gospel message, from the Greek term <i>euangelion</i> . Figures such as Peter and Paul in the Acts of the Apostles engage in evangelization by preaching.
Genre	(<i>n</i>) a kind or sort of literary composition, characterized by style, form, or content, such as a novel or poem. The New Testament consists of 27 texts in a variety of different genres.
Gentile	(<i>adj, n</i>) Jews use this term to identify any non-Jewish person or group.
Good Friday	(<i>n</i>) commemorates the day of Jesus’s Passion and death by crucifixion, in Christian liturgical tradition. The events of the Passion are described in the canonical gospels and referenced in other New Testament texts such as Paul’s letters.
Gospel	(<i>n</i>) means “good news”; is a translation for the Greek word <i>euangelion</i> . It is used as the name for a genre of biographical texts in the New Testament, but it can also refer to the story of Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection in short, oral form.
Hebrew Bible	(<i>n</i>) a collection of texts that are sacred for Judaism, as well as for Christianity and, to some extent, Islam. These texts are also referred to as the Old Testament.
Idol	(<i>n</i>) an object or thing that a person or group worships instead of worshipping God. For biblical authors the term idol usually refers to any deity besides the God of Israel, such as Zeus or Athena in the Greek pantheon.
Idolatry	(<i>n</i>) the practice of worshipping idols. It is forbidden by law in the Hebrew Bible and continues to be rejected by early Christ-believers in the New Testament.
Incarnation	(<i>n</i>) a Christian belief and claim about Jesus that he is God made of flesh, both human and divine. Although the orthodox doctrinal statement about the incarnation is a later Christian development, it relies on New Testament passages such as the prologue of John’s Gospel.

Kenosis	(n) Greek term that means “emptying”; in Christian teaching it refers to Jesus’s humble emptying of himself and his willingness to die on behalf of all people. The famous hymn in Philippians 2 describes God’s self-emptying in the person of Jesus.
Koine Greek	(n) “common” Greek; the language in which the New Testament texts were written. It was the normal language used by people throughout the Greco-Roman world from the 4th century BCE until the 6th century CE.
Liturgy	(n) from the Greek word <i>leitourgia</i> (literally, “a public work”; or “work of the people”), liturgy refers to the public worship practices of a religious community. The New Testament is used in contemporary Christian liturgy, but some of its books also describe the liturgical practices of early Christ-believing communities.
Magi	(n) plural of the Latin <i>magus</i> , which can be translated “magician” but may also refer to Persian priests from the Zoroastrian religious tradition. Matthew’s nativity story identifies the astrologers who travel to honor the infant Jesus as magi.
Mariology	(n) formed on the basis of Mary’s name and the Greek ending <i>-ology</i> ; means knowledge of or teachings about Mary the mother of Jesus. The gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, along with noncanonical sources and church dogma, provide information about Mary that forms the basis of Christian Mariology.
Martyr	(n) from the Greek verb <i>martyrein</i> , which means “to give testimony” or “provide witness.” A martyr is someone who is willing to testify to his or her faith, even to the point of death, giving up his or her life for the sake of faith.
Messiah	(n) Hebrew word meaning “anointed one”; was initially used to describe the Hebrew Bible kings or prophets. The New Testament authors apply the term to Jesus, using the Greek translation <i>Christos</i> , which in English becomes “Christ.”

Occasional	<i>(adj)</i> can mean infrequent or arising from a specific occasion. When it is applied to the letters of the New Testament, it means these texts are written in response to particular situations or occasions, reacting to specific circumstances or answering the questions of a community.
Papyrus	<i>(n)</i> a plant that flourished in ancient Egypt, used to make an ancient form of paper, which is also called papyrus(plural Papyri). Scrolls And Single Sheets Of Papyrus Were Probably The Material New Testament Authors Used To Write Down Their Texts.
Parable	<i>(n)</i> a short narrative with symbolic elements, used to teach a moral lesson. Jesus frequently uses parables to teach his apostles, the crowds, and his Jewish opponents.
Paraenesis	<i>(n)</i> Greek term meaning “advice or counsel”; refers to the practice advice and instructions that New Testament letter writers offer to their readers. Most paraenesis relates to living peacefully in community or maintaining a right relationship with God.
Parousia	<i>(n)</i> Greek term meaning “arrival”; used by early Christ-believers to return to the second coming of Christ, which they anticipated would happen soon. At the parousia, Christ-believers expected the resurrected Jesus would serve as cosmic judge.
Passion	<i>(n)</i> comes from a Latin verb meaning “to suffer.” In the context of the New Testament, it refers to Jesus’s suffering at the time of his crucifixion and death; it can also be used as shorthand to talk about an account of those events(for example, the Passion narrative).
Passover	<i>(n)</i> a Jewish feast that commemorates the first Passover event described in the biblical book of Exodus, when the angel of death “passed over” the houses of Hebrew slaves in Egypt. The gospels of Mark, Matthew & Luke assert that Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with his disciples the night before his crucifixion and that the Passover meal was the Last Supper.

Pax Romana	(n) Latin phrase literally meaning “the Roman peace”; refers to a peaceful period established under the Roman emperor Augustus who ruled from 37 BCE to 14 CE. Because of his work in creating the peace, Augustus was hailed by many in the empire as a savior or “Son of God” – but was seen as a false peace to those living under his occupation.
Pentecost	(n) a Jewish festival(The Feast of Shavuot or The Feast of Weeks) that celebrates the harvest. The New Testament Acts of the Apostles identifies the feast of Pentecost after Jesus’s ascension as the moment when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles and empowered them to carry out an evangelizing mission.
Pharisee	(n) refers to a person who belongs to a particular sect or group within 1st-century Judaism. Pharisees were interested in interpreting the laws of the Hebrew Bible for everyday Jewish life. They are portrayed as Jesus’s adversaries in the gospels.
Pneumatology	(n) formed from two Greek word parts(<i>pneuma</i> - and - <i>ology</i>); means knowledge of or teachings about the Pneuma(the Holy Spirit). The New Testament books, and perhaps especially John’s Gospel, provide many insights into the Pneumatology of the Christ-believers.
Prophecy	(n) Biblical prophecy is presented as the revealed word of God in speech or symbolic action that may predict future events, comment on history(past, present, or future), and guide behavior. Many New Testament writings aim to show that figures such as Jesus and his apostles fulfill Hebrew Bible prophecy, and some New Testament figures prophesize further events.
Prophet	(n) person who claims to speak the word of God to God’s people or to others who need to hear the message. The New Testament not only refers to prophets from Israel’s past but also introduces figures such as John the Baptist or John of Patmos who serve God as prophets.

Pseudepigraphy	(<i>n</i>) refers to the practice of falsely attributing the authorship of a given text to someone who did not write it; combines the Greek roots <i>pseudos</i> (false) and <i>epigraph</i> (inscription). Many biblical scholars agree that some letters in the New Testament that claim to be written by Paul were probably written by a later Christian and falsely attributed to the historical Paul, making them pseudepigraphic texts.
Quelle Or Q	(<i>n</i>) German for “source”; in the context of New Testament studies, refers to a hypothetical source that Matthew and Luke used to compose their gospels. The material that Luke and Matthew share that may have come from Q is mainly composed of sayings, such as the Beatitudes.
Sadducee	(<i>n</i>) refers to a person who belongs to a particular sect or group within 1st-century Judaism. Sadducees were involved in temple worship and were interested in following the teachings of the Torah(Jewish law in the Hebrew Bible) as written, without interpretation; they are portrayed as Jesus’s adversaries in the gospels.
Scribe	(<i>n</i>) usually a person who copies out documents; in the Jewish tradition during the Second Temple period, the scribes were also involved in adjudicating theological and legal debates. In the gospels, the Jewish scribes are frequently portrayed as hostile toward Jesus and his followers.
Second Temple	(<i>adj, n</i>) the Jewish temple in Jerusalem during Jesus’s lifetime, constructed between around 515 BCE(the first temple had been destroyed by Babylonians in 587 BCE) and destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. “Second Temple Judaism” refers to Jewish life and practices during the period between 515 BCE and 70 CE.
Son Of God	(<i>n</i>) a title used for Jesus in the New Testament; many New Testament authors(including John the evangelist and several letter writers) call Christ-believers children of God. The title Son of God was also used for Roman emperors to highlight their power.

Synoptic	(<i>adj</i>) derived from Greek terms meaning “viewed together.” It is used to describe the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke as a group because of the large amount of shared material and even verbal parallels among these three texts.
Testament	(<i>n</i>) in the biblical context is either a person’s last will and testament or another word for covenant. The New Testament receives its name in part because it is seen as a new covenant between God and God’s people, continuing and renewing the covenant of the Hebrew Bible.
Theology	(<i>n</i>) based on two Greek terms meaning the study of or information about God or the divine(<i>theos</i>). The New Testament contains many theological teachings about who God is and why that matters for God’s people.
Zealots	a sect that originated within Second Temple Judaism; promoted resistance to oppressive Roman rule and sought the founding of an autonomous Jewish kingdom. They were active during Jesus’s lifetime, and one member of The Twelve, Simon, is identified as a zealot.