

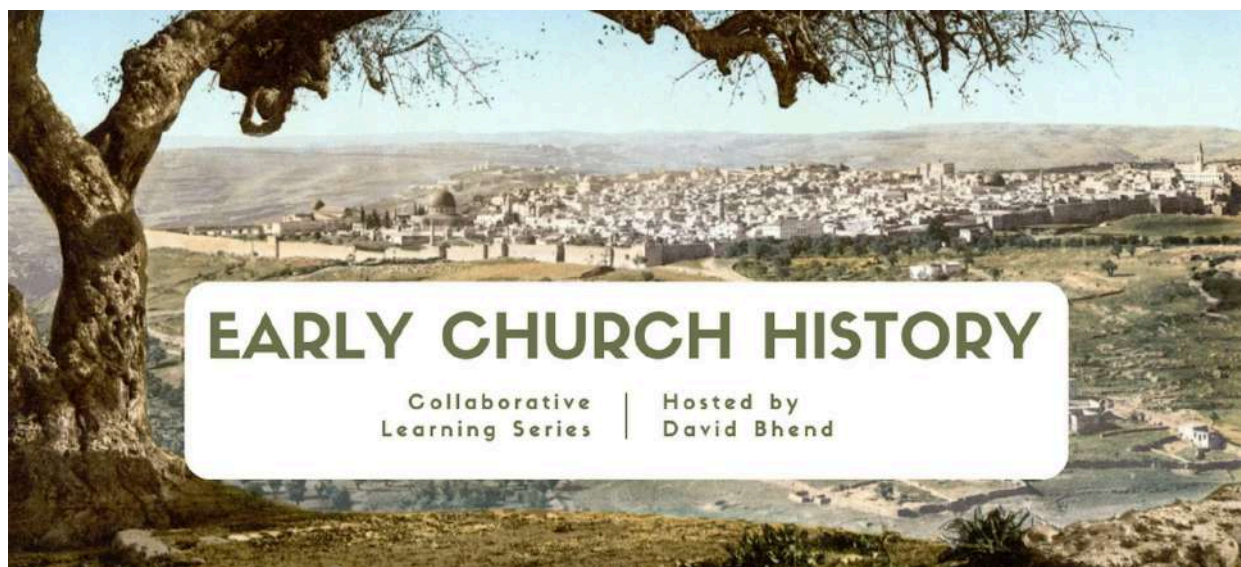


Sample Content

Location: Thoughts From Members

Author: David Bhend

#1 - Development of the New Testament Canon / Notes on KJV



This first article is less of an essay and more of a tabular chronology of early events, writings, and movements of the Apostles and gospel authors. I have personally found this context helpful, and it sets the stage for future discussions on the decentralized structure of the early Church as well as the surprisingly wide variation in beliefs and doctrines.

It's important to note that especially during the first 200 years or so, much of what is known about this period is derived from oral tradition and much of what was written down, including the gospels, was actually written much later and in some cases ascribed to someone other than the actual writer.

Comments regarding Oral Tradition:

One of my early takeaways from this first leg of the journey is a much greater level of respect for the oral tradition. I think it's difficult for us, in our attention-deficit culture, to put any level of trust in information that was transferred from memory vs. paper or digital media.

However, reading about some of the sophisticated techniques for memorization and repetition developed by oral cultures, I'm jealous of their advantages and opportunities to develop mental discipline and enjoy a communal aspect to preservation of knowledge that we know nothing of today. I enjoyed imagining the described frequent and regular ceremonies where the community would gather and recite precious knowledge and scripture together, exercising collective memory and repetition to guard against loss of data and to ensure its integrity.

Comments regarding Attribution of Authorship

This is another area that goes against the bias of our current culture. If I were to remain anonymous and publish this article under the name of Tim Borys for example, most in our culture would consider that deceitful.

However, anonymous authors attributing their writings to another person was a common and widely accepted practice in ancient times (Greek, Roman, and Jewish writings). It was often viewed as a sign of respect towards a great teacher or authoritative figure. The goal was not to deceive but to honor.

There are varying degrees of controversy surrounding authorship of all the writings listed in the attached table. The above comments regarding attribution of authorship and oral tradition may be helpful in understanding how a historical figure's words could be preserved via oral tradition and then written down years later by an anonymous writer with attribution to the historical figure.

Comments regarding Evolution of King James Version Bible

The original King James Version of 1611 has since undergone multiple revisions and corrections and originally contained Apocryphal books. These books included Esdras 1&2, Tobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, Baruch, Maccabees 1&2, and Prayer of Manasseh, among others. These were removed from versions of the KJV used by most Protestant churches by the mid-1800s... relatively few years before the formation of the 2x2 ministry and church. Imagine standing up one Sunday morning and not raising an eyebrow by giving your testimony from 2nd Maccabees 1:17.




With those comments, I invite you to look at the attached chronology and take note of the availability of scripture that we take for granted in our day. See what New Testament writings Christians would have had at their disposal to read or have read to them during the first 100 years or so. I read that even by the early 200s AD, due to the scarcity of these writings, most churches would have relied on just one of the four gospels, whichever being available in their locality. However, there were almost certainly other early documents circulating that were lost and never captured in the canon. Additionally, the oral tradition was alive and well, so we can only imagine the extent of what would have been recited from collective memory of the Good News as it was spread by the Apostles and others, in addition to what may have not been written down and lost forever when the culture shifted away from oral tradition.




The usual disclaimer: I created this table with extensive assistance from ChatGPT and proofed results against my own limited understanding from what I have read.

Please let me know if you see any glaring errors or omissions and I will be happy to revise and republish!






Chronological Overview of Early Christian Events, Writings, and Movements

Legend for Symbols Used in the Table






-  **Historical Events:** Represents significant occurrences impacting the development and context of early Christianity, such as councils, persecutions, or other major historical moments.
-  **Literary Events:** Denotes the composition, compilation, or publication of important Christian texts, including the writing of New Testament books, letters, and key biblical translations.
-  **Journeys/Movements:** Indicates travels and missionary activities of key figures, such as the Apostles' missionary journeys, movements to new regions for spreading Christianity, or significant relocations.

Date (AD)	Event/Development	Details
 30-33	Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus	The death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, marking the foundation of the Christian faith.
 33-35	Early Preaching in Jerusalem (Peter)	Peter, as a leading figure among the Apostles, preaches in Jerusalem and is instrumental in the early spread of Christianity among Jews. He performs miracles and addresses the Sanhedrin.
 34-36	Conversion of Paul (Saul of Tarsus)	On the road to Damascus, Paul experiences a vision of the risen Christ and converts to Christianity.







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Date (AD)	Event/Development	Details
 36-39	Paul's Early Ministry in Arabia and Damascus	After his conversion, Paul spends time in Arabia and Damascus, preaching and reflecting on his faith. He later returns to Damascus, where he narrowly escapes death and is forced to flee to Jerusalem.
 36-42	Peter's Ministry in Judea and Antioch	Peter continues his ministry in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. He later moves to Antioch, where he plays a key role in establishing the church there.
 39-41	Paul's Visit to Jerusalem and Time in Tarsus	After fleeing Damascus, Paul visits Jerusalem to meet with Peter and James the Just. He then travels to his hometown of Tarsus (Cilicia), where he spends several years before being called to Antioch by Barnabas.
 41-43	Paul's Time in Tarsus and Preaching in Syria and Cilicia	During this period, Paul preaches in the regions of Syria and Cilicia, helping to establish early Christian communities. Paul remains relatively isolated until Barnabas brings him to Antioch.
 42-49	Peter's Missionary Journey to Rome and Corinth	Tradition holds that Peter travels to Rome and possibly Corinth, where he preaches the gospel. Peter becomes a central figure in the Roman Christian community.







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Date (AD)	Event/Development	Details
 44-46	Paul's Ministry in Antioch	Paul and Barnabas preach and teach in Antioch, a major center of early Christianity. During this time, Antioch becomes a key hub for the spread of the Gospel to Gentiles. This period culminates in Paul's first missionary journey.
 44	James, son of Zebedee martyred	James, the brother of John, is the first Apostle to be martyred, killed by Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:2). His death likely occurred around 44 AD.
 46-48	Paul's First Missionary Journey	Paul, along with Barnabas, embarks on his first missionary journey, traveling to Cyprus and regions in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) to preach the gospel.
 48-49	Council of Jerusalem (Peter and Paul)	Paul and Barnabas meet with the apostles, including Peter and James, in Jerusalem to discuss the inclusion of Gentiles in the Church. The council decides that Gentile converts do not need to follow the full Mosaic Law.
 49-51	Paul's Second Missionary Journey (with Silas, Timothy, Luke)	Paul travels through Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece, establishing churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth. Luke, the Gospel author, is believed to accompany Paul during this journey.








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Date (AD)	Event/Development	Details
  50-60	Matthew's Ministry and Gospel Writing	Tradition holds that Matthew, one of the Twelve Apostles, preaches to Jewish communities in Judea before possibly traveling to regions such as Ethiopia or Persia. He is traditionally credited with writing the Gospel of Matthew.
 50-68	Andrew's Ministry in Scythia, Greece, and Asia Minor	Andrew, the brother of Peter, is traditionally believed to have preached in Scythia (modern-day Ukraine and southern Russia), Greece, and Asia Minor. He is martyred in Patras, Greece.
 50-60	Philip's Ministry in Phrygia	Philip is traditionally believed to have preached in Phrygia (modern-day Turkey) and was martyred in Hierapolis.
 52-70	Thomas's Ministry in India	Thomas is traditionally believed to have traveled to India, where he established Christian communities in Kerala. He was martyred in Mylapore, India.
 52-57	Paul's Third Missionary Journey (with Luke)	Paul spends extended time in Ephesus (about three years) and revisits churches in Macedonia and Greece. Luke is believed to be with Paul during part of this journey and begins collecting material for his Gospel.







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Date (AD)	Event/Development	Details
 60-80	Bartholomew's Ministry in Armenia and India	Bartholomew is traditionally believed to have preached in Armenia, India, and possibly other parts of the Middle East. He was martyred in Armenia.
 53-54	1 Corinthians Written	Paul writes to the church in Corinth to address issues of division, immorality, and questions about resurrection.
 55-57	2 Corinthians, Romans, and Galatians Written	Paul writes these letters to address theological issues, defend his apostleship, and prepare for his visit to Rome.
 57-80	James the Just's Ministry in Jerusalem	James the Just (Brother of Jesus), traditionally identified as the leader of the church in Jerusalem, was martyred in Jerusalem around 62 AD.
 57-60	Paul's Arrest and Imprisonment in Caesarea	Paul is arrested in Jerusalem and eventually transferred to Caesarea, where he is held for about two years. Luke may have spent this time collecting more information for his writings.
 60-62	Paul's Imprisonment in Rome (with Luke)	Paul is under house arrest in Rome, where he continues to preach and writes letters, including Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Luke is likely with him during this period.






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Date (AD)	Event/Development	Details
 60-62	Mark's Gospel Written	Traditionally attributed to John Mark, this gospel is believed to be based on Peter's teachings and is considered the earliest of the four gospels.
 60-90	Thaddeus's Ministry in Mesopotamia	Thaddeus (Jude) is traditionally believed to have preached in Mesopotamia and was martyred in Lebanon or Syria.
 60-90	Simon the Zealot's Ministry in Persia	Simon the Zealot is traditionally believed to have preached in Persia (modern-day Iran) and was martyred there.
 60-90	Matthias's Ministry in Cappadocia and Armenia	Matthias, chosen to replace Judas Iscariot, is traditionally believed to have preached in Cappadocia (modern-day Turkey) and Armenia. He was martyred in Colchis (modern-day Georgia).
 62-63	James (Brother of Jesus) Martyred	James, leader of the Jerusalem church, is martyred.
 62-63	Acts of the Apostles Written (by Luke)	Likely written by Luke, Acts documents the early history of the Church, the missionary journeys of Paul, and the movements of Peter and other apostles.
 62-65	Paul's Final Years and Martyrdom	Paul is believed to have been released from his first imprisonment, continued his ministry, and was later martyred in Rome under Nero.






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Date (AD)	Event/Development	Details
 62-67	Peter's Final Years and Martyrdom	Peter continues his ministry, traditionally in Rome, where he is eventually martyred by crucifixion under Emperor Nero.
 65-70	Gospel of Matthew and Gospel of Luke Written	The Gospel of Matthew, attributed to the Apostle Matthew, and the Gospel of Luke, attributed to Luke the physician and companion of Paul, are written, drawing on earlier sources, including Mark's Gospel.
 70	Destruction of the Second Temple	The Roman army destroys the Temple in Jerusalem, marking a significant event for Jewish and Christian history.
 70-80	Epistle to the Hebrews Written	This epistle, addressing Jewish Christians, emphasizes the superiority of Christ and the new covenant over the old covenant.
 80-90	Gospel of John and Johannine Epistles Written	The Gospel of John and the letters of 1, 2, and 3 John are written, focusing on the theological significance of Jesus as the Word made flesh.
 85-90	The Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Timothy, Titus) Written	These letters, traditionally attributed to Paul, address church organization and leadership.










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Date (AD)	Event/Development	Details
 90-100	John the Apostle's Ministry in Ephesus	John, traditionally believed to have been the last surviving Apostle, settled in Ephesus, where he wrote the Gospel of John, his Epistles, and the Book of Revelation. He is believed to have died of natural causes.
 90-95	Revelation Written	The Book of Revelation, traditionally attributed to the Apostle John, is written, offering apocalyptic visions and hope to persecuted Christians.
 95-100	1 Peter and 2 Peter Written	Although traditionally attributed to the Apostle Peter, these epistles are believed by many scholars to have been written later, possibly by followers of Peter, after his martyrdom (circa 62-67 AD). This suggests these letters may have been composed in Peter's name to preserve and disseminate his teachings.
 100-110	Early Recognition of the Canonical Gospels	By this time, the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are increasingly recognized as authoritative accounts of Jesus' life and teachings.
 140-180	Marcion's Canon and the Response	Marcion of Sinope proposes an early Christian canon that excludes the Old Testament and includes only a version of Luke's Gospel and Paul's letters. The Church's response leads to important discussions about the authoritative Christian canon.





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Date (AD)	Event/Development	Details
 150-160	Muratorian Fragment	The earliest known list of New Testament writings (though incomplete) includes most of the current New Testament books, indicating an emerging consensus.
 180-200	Irenaeus of Lyons' Influence	Irenaeus strongly advocates for the four canonical Gospels and opposes Gnostic writings, helping to solidify the core New Testament canon.
 300-367	Development of the New Testament Canon	Over these centuries, church leaders and councils debate and affirm various writings. By 367 AD, Athanasius of Alexandria lists the 27 books of the New Testament in his Easter letter, the first known reference to the complete New Testament as we know it today.
 312	Constantine's Conversion to Christianity	Before the Battle of Milvian Bridge, Emperor Constantine converts to Christianity, claiming to have seen a vision of the cross. His conversion begins the process of transforming Christianity into an imperial religion.
 313	Edict of Milan Legalizes Christianity	Constantine and Licinius issue the Edict of Milan, granting religious tolerance throughout the Roman Empire and effectively legalizing Christianity.

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Date (AD)	Event/Development	Details
 380	Edict of Thessalonica Declares Christianity State Religion	Emperor Theodosius I issues the Edict of Thessalonica, making Nicene Christianity the official state religion of the Roman Empire. This marks a significant turning point in Christian history.
  382	Council of Rome	Pope Damasus I, influenced by the work of Jerome, confirms the canon of the 27 books of the New Testament.
  393-397	Councils of Hippo and Carthage	These North African councils reaffirm the 27-book New Testament canon, which becomes widely accepted in the Western Church.
 405	Jerome's Vulgate	Jerome completes the Latin Vulgate, which includes the 27 New Testament books and becomes the standard Bible for the Western Church.
  1455	Gutenberg Bible Printed	The first major book printed using movable type, the Gutenberg Bible (Latin Vulgate), marks a milestone in the dissemination of the Bible.
 1611	King James Version (KJV) Published	Commissioned by King James I of England, this English translation of the Bible becomes one of the most influential versions. It initially includes the Apocryphal books, following the tradition of the Latin Vulgate, but these are later removed in most Protestant editions by the 19th century.

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Date (AD)	Event/Development	Details
 1769	KJV Revised (Blayney's Revision)	The KJV undergoes significant revision by Benjamin Blayney, modernizing spelling and grammar. This edition becomes the standard text for future publications of the KJV.
 1881-1885	Revised Version (RV)	The first official revision of the KJV, aiming to correct translation errors based on better knowledge of Hebrew and Greek texts.
 1946-1952	Revised Standard Version (RSV)	The RSV, another revision of the KJV, is produced to be more accessible to modern readers while maintaining accuracy to the original texts.
 1989	New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)	The NRSV is published as a further revision, incorporating the latest biblical scholarship and aiming for inclusive language and modern readability.