

New Testament Summary Chart

Introduction: The idea here is to give you a brief summary of what books are in the New Testament and what is contained in these books.

Summary Charts of Books

The Gospels	Acts of the Apostles	The Pauline Epistles
The General Epistles		The Book of Revelation

Charts, Maps and Timelines

Paul's Lifetime Timeline	The Church in the First Century	New Testament Books Timeline
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Unlike the Old Testament, the entire New Testament was composed over a very short period of time, less than 60 years (possibly less than 50 years), by 8 or 9 authors, most of whom knew one another. All of the writers of the New Testament either knew of the incidents that they wrote about firsthand, or knew those who observed the incidents firsthand. They appear to know the people to whom the letters are written, with the possible exception of Hebrews and other letters which seem to be more general.

There are several very noteworthy facts which are often skipped over or not fully appreciated: Jesus's ministry was only for 3 or 4 years (approximately A.D. 26–30).¹ He wrote nothing down. Yet, there are more historical accounts of his life, death, burial and resurrection written down by more observers in more detail than of any other historical figure from, say, pre-1600 A.D. If we had this much recorded information about any other historical figure, then historians would have accepted such documents as completely and unequivocally accurate.

Furthermore, Jesus' ministry was confined to a very small geographical area, most of which He traversed by foot.² He taught mostly in the Galilean area and occasionally down in Jerusalem, and in several places in between. These two areas are less than 80 miles from one another. No other religious figure had a more limited geographical ministry than our Lord.

¹ In contrast, both Mohammed and Buddha spent 3 or 4 years beginning their ministry, beginning to gather up disciples; and then Mohammed's entire ministry was about 20 years and Buddha's was about 45 years. The dates given throughout are dates determined by other scholars; I have never personally made a study of these dates.

² Mohammed traveled over much of Saudi Arabia and Buddha traveled throughout much of India.

We know very little about Jesus' looks. He was probably very strong, he had a beard, and He looked very average (unlike Old Testament icons like Moses, Saul or David). Because of the customs of the day and a remark made by Paul, Jesus probably had short hair. However, there are no actual physical descriptions of our Lord in the New Testament. The paintings and visage that we associate with Jesus are pure fantasy.

This was an unusual time period. The Jews were looking for a Messiah, but they envisioned a Messiah who would lead them in rebellion against the Romans. The Jews were so angered by Roman rule that they rebelled on several occasions and Rome eventually came in with armies and destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D., dispersing the Jews to other areas.

Although Christianity began in the general area of occupied Israel (occupied by the Romans), it began to spread throughout the Roman empire, to Gentiles less volatile areas. The Apostle Paul's first missionary journey took place around 45 A.D., later followed by 3 other missionary journeys. Paul was executed around 67–68 A.D., before the fall of Jerusalem.

Gospel means *good news*. These are the 4 books that are first-hand or second-hand accounts about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These books were all written after the death and resurrection of our Lord.

The Gospels

The gospels are the historical, biographical accounts of the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other person and no other set of events from any period of time prior to the printing press with this sort of historical documentation. We have two eyewitnesses to the Person and events and two accounts from people who spoke to eyewitnesses of Jesus and the events of his life, which, together, form a unique history of Jesus and His time.

Book	Comments
Matthew	<p>Matthew was one of the two disciples of Jesus who were eyewitnesses to the events that they recorded. He is called Levi in the books of Mark and Luke.</p> <p>Matthew was a tax collector, and, as such, as anathema to Jewish society.</p> <p>Although all of the gospels quote Old Testament Scripture, Matthew quotes more of it than anyone else. Either he knew the Bible well or he learned much of it quickly as a disciple.</p> <p>Some believe that Matthew recorded this history in the 50's or 60's; others even place it later. It seems unlikely that Matthew would have used any other gospel as source material, as he was an eyewitness.</p>

The Gospels

Mark

Mark is an assistant to Peter, a disciple of Jesus, and some consider this to be Peter's gospel. There are things that we would closely associate with Peter's personality here. Peter was very action-oriented; he was a doer; so much of the book of Mark is about action and less about dialogue than the other gospels.

Why Mark would write this book and not Peter is not clear, as Peter did write two epistles (letters). Let me suggest that Peter tended to be a man of action; an epistle—a letter written to specific people for specific reasons—would be a specific act with a specific purpose to Peter. Also, epistles tended to be short, and could be written at one sitting. However, for Peter to just sit down and write what he remembers of Jesus' ministry without a specific audience would not necessarily appeal to his personality type. Another possible reason that Peter did not write this down is, it simply did not occur to him. However, it may have occurred to his disciple, Mark, who possibly learns about Jesus directly from Peter.

Many think that Mark was the first gospel to be produced, in the 50's or 60's.

Luke

Luke is a physician and he is not one of the original disciples. In fact, his association appears to be mostly with Paul, who was not an original disciple either. Luke appears to have worked from source material and from personal interviews to write this gospel.

There are clues in this book that this book was written primarily for gentiles outside of the land of Palestine. Luke recognized that Jesus was a Person for all mankind, and not for the Jews only, although Luke clearly presents Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament Scripture (Luke 4:18–21).

It is my estimation that Luke probably relied upon both the books of Mark and Matthew as some of his source material. This would obviously mean that these books had already been written and that he had access to them.

Luke, the only Greek to write anything in the New Testament, appears to think chronologically rather than thematically (more common among Hebrews); so his gospel is probably chronological.

Luke would have written his gospel between the late 50's to perhaps as late as the 70's. Several sources suggest that Luke was written between A.D. 59–63.

The Gospels

John

John is the other Apostle of Jesus to write a biography of Jesus as an eyewitness. What he writes is consistent with the Person of Jesus, and some incidents overlap, but his gospel is so much different from the other gospels.

John writes as if Greek is not his primary language or as a person who simply was not well-educated. The Greek in this book and his epistles is the simplest, easiest-to-read in the original language. The book of John contains probably the clearest theological precepts.

The Deity of Jesus Christ and the concept of salvation by means of faith in Jesus Christ are two topics seen over and over again. This is a very good book for a new believer or a young believer to be taught.

John was a keen observer of people, and you will learn more about the Apostles of Jesus in this book than in any other. He will record more dialogue spoken by the disciples than any of the other writers.

Recently, some scholars suggest that John may have been written in the 70's; however, most traditions believe this book to have been written sometime after A.D. 85.

No other early historical figure has his life this carefully recorded.

[Summary Charts of Books](#)

[Charts, Maps and Timelines](#)

The early church is also examined historically.

Acts of the Apostles

Book	Comments
Acts	<p>The Acts of the Apostles is an historical account of the Apostles between A.D. 30–67, recorded by Luke, who was an eyewitness to some of the events at the end of the book and knew the Apostles from the earlier portion of the book.</p> <p>Although this book begins with Peter speaking to Jews from all over Roman empire, most of the book is about Paul, who ministered primarily to the Gentiles. Paul is a later convert to Christianity, who is the twelfth Apostle, the replacement for Judas. Although he wanted to witness to the Jews, God guided him primarily to speak to Gentile audiences.</p> <p>Paul went on 4 missionary journeys, all of which are recorded in the book of Acts.</p>

Believers ought to be careful about attempting to copy the incidents found in the Book of Acts. The Epistles contain the doctrines and the mandates for believers in the Church Age, not the Book of Acts.

Summary Charts of Books

Charts, Maps and Timelines

An *epistle* is simply a fancy, KJV name for a *letter* or *missive*. It is ironic that now, in the age of emails, at a time when many young people have never written a letter, that more and more modern English translations are finally using the word *letter* rather than *epistle*.

Most of the time, these are letters written to churches, often churches where there are conflicts or disagreements. The intent of much of the typical epistle is to straighten out a particular set of problems in a local church.

The epistles are, for all intents and purposes, the fundamentals of Church Age doctrine. These epistles do not replace the rest of the Bible as the Word of God but they are composed of the doctrines which are most essential and particular to Church Age believers.

Pauline Epistles simply refer to the 13 letters written by Paul, 9 to churches, and 4 to individuals. Paul's letters are all grouped together first in most Bibles and put in order of size. The numbers in front of some of these epistles simply indicate 1st letter written and then 2nd letter written. In some cases, it appears that more letters were written to the Corinthians than these two, but we only have the text of two of them.

You will note that, on many occasions, Paul has to justify his own authority in spiritual matters to the readers. We would expect this to be the case, as Paul was saved long after the Church Age began, and yet he took on a position of authority equal to the Apostles who actually walked with our Lord. Therefore, we would not expect Peter, say, to justify his authority. However, we would expect this to be an issue to some of those to whom Paul wrote.

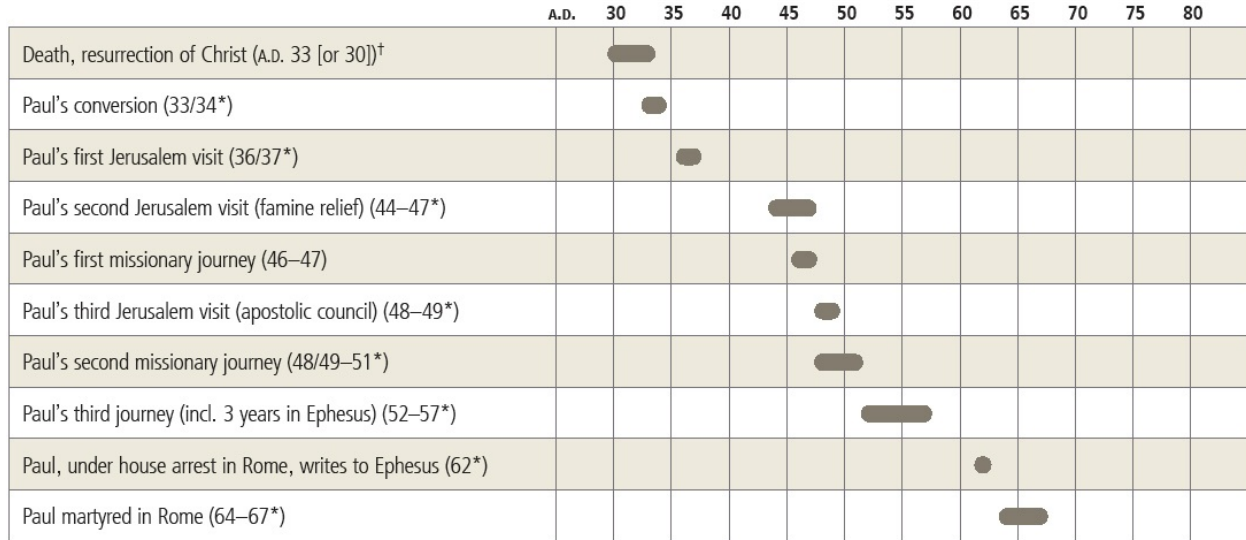
The Pauline Epistles	
Book	Comments
Romans	Romans is probably the most complex epistles written by Paul. Much of this book is devoted to defining the relationship between the church and Israel. This leads Paul into many topics, including the law versus grace, God's sovereignty, and the believer's place in this world.
1Corinthians	The church at Corinth was in shambles, spiritually speaking. They were suing one another, they were involved in all kinds of inordinate competition, their services were loud and disorganized, the church had separated into several factions, and one member of the church was involved in incest. This first epistle deals with all of the internal conflicts within the church as well as the spiritual relationship between believers. There are very memorable doctrines covered in this epistle, including the ability of all believers to grow through doctrinal comprehension, what believers ought to do immediately after salvation, the concept of love, and how God has organized believers in death.
2Corinthians	The Corinthian church had been invaded by false teachers, so that Paul had to defend his authority and position. He also thoroughly explains the concept of giving for believers.
Galatians	The primarily gentile church at Galatia was infiltrated by Jewish teachers who tried to get the Galatians to obey the Law of Moses after their salvation, suggesting that this is the spiritual life for believers. Paul has to justify his own understanding of the gospel first, and then he explains to them how things now stand in the Church Age, and how believers in the Church Age are not under the Mosaic Law.
Ephesians	Unlike Corinth and Galatia, the Ephesians were not in some sort of crisis, and Paul takes this opportunity to teach them some advanced doctrines pertinent only to the Church Age.
Philippians	Similarly, Paul seems to have a close connection with the Philippians, and his letter here tends to be more personal and joyous, with some doctrine and little by way of reprimand.

The Pauline Epistles

Book	Comments
Colossians	Although there were some problems in the church at Colossi, Paul first contemplated the Person of Jesus Christ—particularly as we ought to understand Him in the Church Age. Paul went from there to the Christian walk as well as how they ought to interact with other believers.
1Thessalonians	The Thessalonians appeared to suffer a lot of personal setbacks and some even seemed ready to forsake the Christian way of life. Paul had to defend his apostleship, exhort the believers in Thessalonika, and comfort them as well. Interestingly enough, Paul taught them about the future Day of the Lord.
2Thessalonians	Although the Thessalonians had seemed to take Paul’s previous letter to heart and many of them had begun to grow spiritually, there was no little confusion about the end times, which Paul had to explain once again.
The Pastoral Epistles:	
1Timothy	Timothy appears to be a young, inexperienced pastor in charge of a church and running into a lot of problems with his congregation. Paul writes to him about his gift, his authority, and the basic teaching which applied to different groups of people that Timothy was teaching.
2Timothy	This is one of Paul’s most personal letters. It appears that his end is drawing near, and Paul feels that he has been deserted by a great many people. However, he encourages Timothy to remain faithful in his calling, to continue teaching the Word of God, as well as what to avoid and what sort of apostasy may rise up.
Titus	Titus is in Crete dealing with a difficult church. Paul deals with the different types of congregants that Titus has as well as the social responsibilities of Christians. Paul also warns about problematic doctrines of some Jewish teachers, called by many translators, Judaizers.
A final personal epistle	
Philemon	Philemon is a believer with whom Paul is acquainted and Philemon’s slave, Onesimus, has run away and come to Paul in some desperation. Paul is going to send this slave back to Philemon, but with the suggestion—not the command—to set Philemon free.

The study and understanding of these epistles are fundamental to the Christian life.

Paul's Lifetime Timeline



* denotes approximate date; / signifies either/or; † see *The Date of Jesus' Crucifixion*, pp. 1809–1810

Chart taken from <http://www.boundless.org/2005/articles/a0001865.cfm> accessed February 18, 2012.

Summary Charts of Books

Charts, Maps and Timelines

Other Apostles besides Paul wrote epistles, and they are found grouped together near the end of most New Testament translations.

Generally speaking, it is the final seven epistles, excluding the book of Hebrews, which are called the General (Catholic) epistles.

These letters, apart from 3John, are general in nature, written to Church Age believers, but not to any specific person or church.

It is also worth noting that these are the books which have been most questioned as to their inclusion in the canon of Scripture. 2Peter seems to have a very different writing style than 1Peter; the actual author of James is unclear; and Jude, 2John and 3John all appear to be too short.

However, on the other hand, there is not a set of epistles out there that nearly made it into the canon of Scripture, and just lost out by a vote or two.

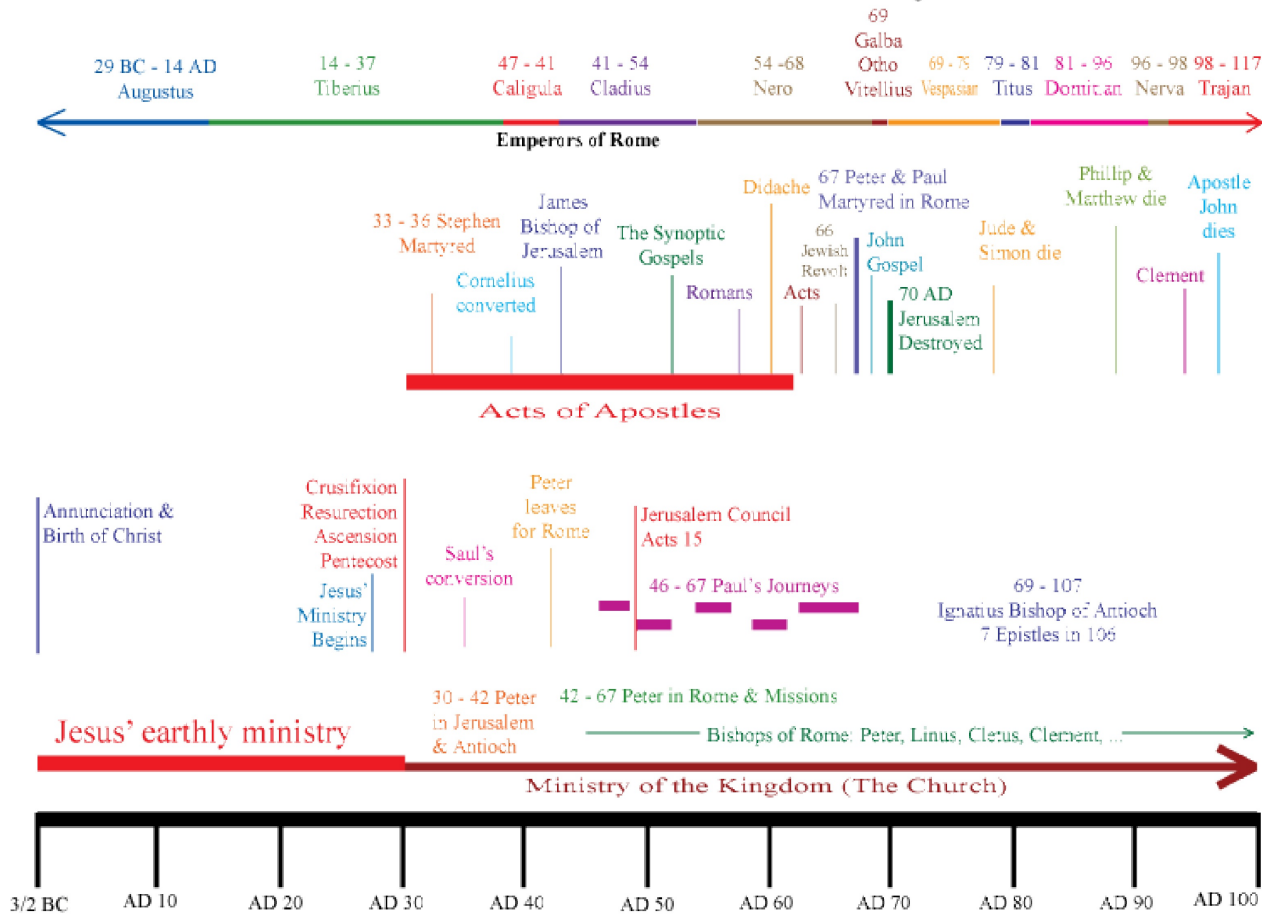
The General Epistles

Book	Comments
Hebrews	<p>Hebrews is one of the most amazing books in the New Testament, yet we do not know who wrote this letter. It is fascinating because, most of these letters and books are accepted as authoritative because the author is an Apostle or someone closely associated with an Apostle. If I were to make a guess of the authorship of this epistle, it would be probably a Greek who did not want his name associated with this plea, since his name might dissuade some from reading any further. This person wanted to grab the Hebrew reader from the very beginning and guide him to a place where he simply could not deny that Jesus is the Messiah.</p> <p>Hebrews is not written to a church or to a particular individual; in fact, so that we would be hard-pressed to determine not only who wrote it but who exactly received this letter. However, part of the concept here is, this epistle focuses in on Jesus, not on the author of this letter.</p> <p>This appears to be a final effort to speak to the Jews in Judæa, to show to them through many Old Testament Scriptures, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. The author ties the negative volition of Jews in the past to the negative volition of Jews who read this letter.</p> <p>The writer takes many narratives from the Old Testament and relates them to the Jews and to Jesus Christ and explains how Jesus is the fulfillment of these things.</p>
James	<p>Most scholars believe that James, the half-brother of our Lord, wrote this epistle, which is probably the most practical of the epistles. It is estimated that James wrote this sometime between A.D. 50–60; he was martyred in A.D. 62. He addresses this letter to the 12 tribes who are scattered among the Gentiles, so this appears to be a letter to Jewish Christians.</p> <p>In many ways, this seems to be a contrast between the practices of the pharisees as compared to Christians. The rich were sometime seen as higher up than the poor; and actions were seen as very important. What is actually said—sins of the tongue—is a major topic in this epistle.</p>

The General Epistles

Book	Comments
1Peter	Peter, the famous Apostle, wrote this epistle to the Christians in Asia Minor between A.D. 62 and 69. Peter writes a great deal about submission to authorities. Much of this epistle focuses on conduct and actions, which is what we would expect from a man like Peter, who always was a man of action.
2Peter	This second epistle is unusual because it appears as though Peter just sat down and wrote a few things out. It does not appear as though he has a particular audience; it does not appear as if he is sending this letter to anyone in particular. In the first chapter, Peter uses the 1 st person plural, suggesting that he is writing this as if representing the Apostles with whom He was associated. He affirms that what he taught over the years were not cleverly devised fables, but the truth. He warns of things to come—particular false teachers and those who scoff at the Person of Jesus Christ; and he affirms, here at the end of his life, that Jesus would return.
1John	The Apostle John, as an old man, writes down a few thoughts, speaking of life in Christ as real and contemporary. Also, just as his gospel taught the most foundational information—that Jesus is God and we are saved by faith in Him—John teaches how to have fellowship with God restored, which is based upon naming one's sins to God. John, self-described as the Apostle whom Jesus loved, teaches a great deal about love in this epistle, but it appears to be synonymous for being in fellowship with God.
2John	Ancient evangelists and teachers were often taken into the homes of others as they traveled about teaching. John acknowledges one woman who brought in believers into her home. However, he is identified as the <i>elder</i> in the epistle and not by his name.
3John	As above, John identifies himself as the <i>elder</i> . He commends Gaius for his hospitality which is shown to itinerant teachers who come into his area.
Jude	This may be written by the second Apostle named Judas; and this epistle may be written by the Lord's half-brother named Judas. In any case, this epistle is addressed to believers and is all over the map when it come to subject matter. He speaks of false teaches, Sodom and Gomorrah, the archangel Michael, the devil, the body of Moses, Balaam, Cain, Korah, Enoch and Adam, and this is in just the first 14 verses. It is one of the most unusual books in the Bible.

The Church in the First Century



Taken from:

<http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/charts/First%20Century%20of%20the%20Church%20Timeline.htm>
 accessed February 18, 2012. Also, by the vocabulary, it should be obvious that this is from a Catholic website. However, the dates seem to be reasonable.

Summary Charts of Books

Charts, Maps and Timelines

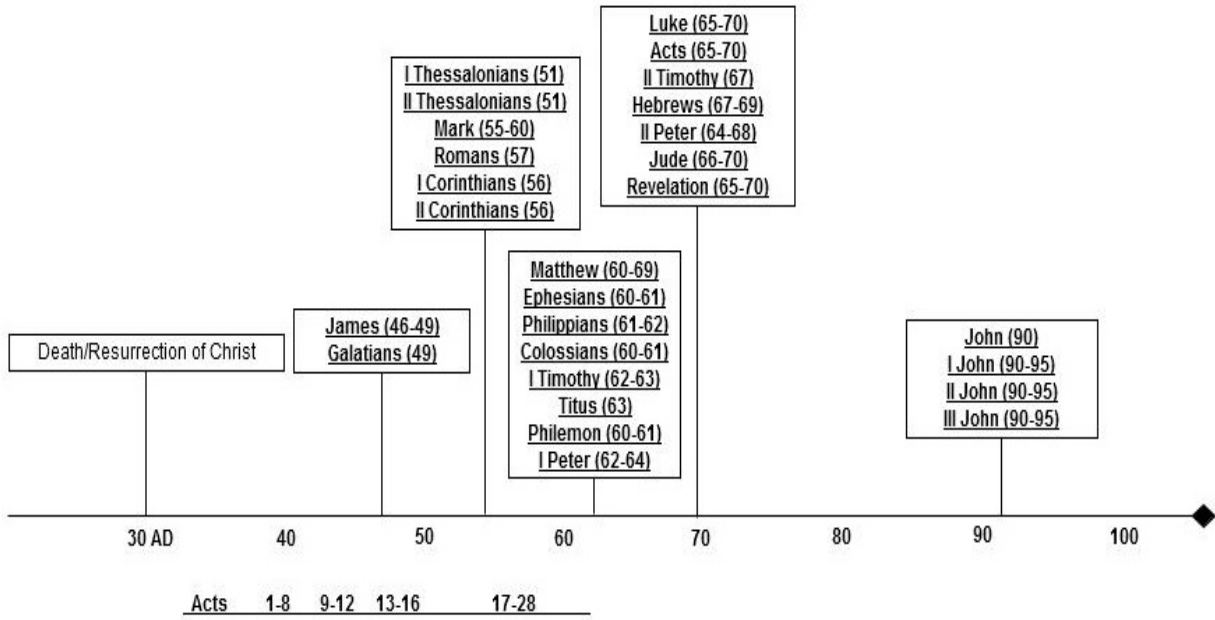


The Book of Revelation

Book	Comments
Revelation	<p>Revelation is the final book of the Bible. The first 3 chapters are spent on the church, where Jesus speaks to the various churches, which gives some generalizations as to how the churches will function in the Church Age.</p> <p>However, in Rev. 4, there is a remarkable change of pace, where the writer, John, finds himself looking at an opening to heaven to see what would come to pass after these things (reasonably understood to come to pass after the Church Age).</p> <p>The bulk of this book takes us through the Tribulation where John, with a 1st century mind and vocabulary describes a vision of things yet future from our time; and therefore a future with technology we may have difficulty describing.</p> <p>In Rev. 20, Satan is bound for 1000 years, which is presumably the time of the Millennium, when Jesus comes to this earth to rule over it, in the kingdom which He promised the Jews during His early ministry.</p> <p>Satan would be released from this prison for a short time, and he will lead a revolt against the Lord Jesus Christ, who will have presided, by that time, over 1000 years of a perfect environment and a perfect government. However, because of man's heart, people will join in this rebellion against Jesus Christ. This answers that environmental objections where people blame their parents or their upbringing.</p> <p>The end of this book describes the eternal state and the new heavens and new earth.</p>

Just as Genesis is the perfect foundation for the Word of God, so Revelation is the perfect ending.

New Testament Books Timeline



New Testament Books Timeline
**Placement on timeline approximate*

From: http://www.fontainebaptist.com/BibleSurvey/NT_Books_Timeline.jpg accessed February 18, 2012.