

New Testament Chronology

Dates in the Gospels

- I. *In the days of Herod the king (Matt. 2:1)*
 - A. When he had done those things, he died, the fifth day after he had caused Antipater to be slain; having reigned, since he had procured Antigonus to be slain, thirty-four years; but since he had been declared king by the Romans, thirty-seven.—A man he was of great barbarity towards all men equally, and a slave to his passions; but above the consideration of what was right; (Antiq. 17:191)
 - B. So Herod, having survived the slaughter of his son five days, died, having reigned thirty-four years, since he had caused Antigonus to be slain, and obtained his kingdom; but thirty-seven years since he had been made king by the Romans. Now, as for his fortune, it was prosperous in all other respects, if ever any other man could be so; since, from a private man, he obtained the kingdom, and kept it so long, and left it to his own sons; but still in his domestic affairs, he was a most unfortunate man. (War 1:665)
 - C. But Herod deprived this Matthias of the high priesthood, and burnt the other Matthias, who had raised the sedition, with his companions, alive. And that very night there was an eclipse of the moon. (Antiq. 17:167)
 - D. Possible eclipses
 1. March 13th, 4 B.C.
 2. December 29, 1 B.C.
 - E. Herod ruled from 37 – 4 B.C.
- II. *In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene— during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. (Lk 3:1–2)*
 - A. Date of Tiberius' reign
 1. Tiberius reigned solo from A.D. 14 – 37.
 2. Tiberius reigned with co-principis authority from A.D. 12 – 37
 3. The 15th year of Tiberius would have been A.D. 27.
- III. *The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" (Jn 2:20)*
 - A. And now Herod, in the eighteenth year of his reign, and after the acts already mentioned, undertook a very great work, that is, to build of himself the temple of God, and make it larger in compass, and to raise it to a most magnificent altitude, as esteeming it to be the most glorious of all his actions, as it really was, to bring it to perfection, and that this would be sufficient for an everlasting memorial of him; (Antiq. 15:380)
 - B. Herod reigned from 37 – 4 B.C.)
 - C. Herod would have begun the project around 20 – 19 B.C.
 - D. 46 years later would have been A.D. 26 – 28.

Key Dates in Acts

- I. *On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died. (Ac 12:21–23)*

- A. Now, when Agrippa had reigned three years over all Judea, he came to the city Cesarea, which was formerly called Strato's Tower; and there he exhibited shows in honor of Caesar, upon his being informed that there was a certain festival celebrated to make vows for his safety. At which festival, a great multitude was gotten together of the principal persons, and such as were of dignity through his province. (19.8.2) On the second day of which shows he put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a contexture truly wonderful, and came into the theatre early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him; (19.8.2) and presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another (though not for his good), that he was a god; and they added, "Be thou merciful to us; for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature." (19.8.2) Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. But, as he presently afterwards looked up, he saw an owl sitting on a certain rope over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings, as it had once been the messenger of good tidings to him; and fell into the deepest sorrow. A severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner. (19.8.2) He therefore looked upon his friends, and said, "I whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life; while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me; and I, who was by you called immortal, am immediately to be hurried away by death. But I am bound to accept of what Providence allots as it pleases God; for we have by no means lived ill, but in a splendid and happy manner." (19.8.2) When he said this, his pain was become violent. Accordingly he was carried into the palace; and the rumor went abroad everywhere, that he would certainly die in a little time. (19.8.2) But the multitude presently sat in sackcloth, with their wives and children, after the law of their country, and besought God for the king's recovery. All places were also full of mourning and lamentation. Now the king rested in a high chamber, and as he saw them below lying prostrate on the ground, he could not himself forbear weeping. (19.8.2) And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life, being in the fifty-fourth year of his age, and in the seventh year of his reign; (19.8.2) for he reigned four years under Caius Caesar, three of them were over Philip's tetrarchy only, and on the fourth he had that of Herod added to it; and he reigned besides those, three years under the reign of Claudius Caesar: in which time he reigned over the forementioned countries, and also had Judea added to them, as also Samaria and Cesarea. (Antiq. 19:343-351)
- B. Herod died in A.D. 44. He ruled from A.D. 37 – 44.
- II. *There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, (Ac 18:2)*
- A. Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome. Suetonius, *Life of Claudius*, 25.4
- B. Claudius (January 24, 41 – October 13, 54)
- C. Generally, this event is dated A.D. 49.
- D. One reason is a statement by Paulus Orosius, a 5th century writer.
1. Josephus reports, 'In his ninth year the Jews were expelled by Claudius from the city.' But Suetonius, who speaks as follows, influences me more: 'Claudius expelled from

Rome the Jews constantly rioting at the instigation of Christ [Christo, or rather xpo].¹ As far as whether he had commanded that the Jews rioting against Christ [Christum] be restrained and checked or also had wanted the Christians, as persons of a cognate religion, to be expelled, it is not at all to be discerned.

2. There is difficulty with Orosius' statement because the Josephus source cannot be found.
- III. *While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him into court. "This man," they charged, "is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law." (Ac 18:12–13)*
- A. "Tiberius Claudius Caesar Germanicus Highest Priest, invested with tribunician authority for the 12th time [52 AD], acclaimed Imperator for the 26th time...L. Junius Gallio, my friend and proconsul". . ., The Delphi, or Gallio, Inscription
 - B. Delphi had been a primary religious center for the ancient Greeks, but by the time of the Roman Empire it had lost much of its influence because the Senate and the Emperor made their own decisions without consulting oracles. This loss of influence caused Delphi to be depopulated, and to prevent the abandonment of the city, Emperor Claudius ordered the proconsul Gallio to use incentives to persuade people to move to Delphi.
 - C. Gallio had his official residence at Corinth, the capital of the province, where he encountered the Apostle Paul around 51 AD. As the provincial governor, Gallio heard the most important cases at the bema seat.
- IV. *Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, where the chief priests and Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges against Paul. (Ac 25:1–2)*
- A. Evidently Festus' term was quite brief, beginning in A.D. 58/59 and ending abruptly with his death from illness in A.D. 62.
 - B. Festus' dealings with Paul are at the beginning of his administration.

James

- Potential Authors
 - James the son of Zebedee
 - Martyred in Acts 12
 - Herod Agrippa died in A.D. 44.
 - James the son of Alphaeus
 - James the Less (same as above?)
 - Father of Judas, not Iscariot
 - James, brother of Jude
 - James, brother of Jesus
 - Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. (Mark 6:3)
 - Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, (1C 15:7)
 - I saw none of the other apostles — only James, the Lord's brother. (Galatians 1:19)
 - James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. (Galatians 2:9)
 - Acts 8, which records Paul persecuting Christians, was probably A.D. 33-35.
 - Acts 12, the death of James, brother of John, was probably A.D. 43- 44.
- Hints to date of writing

- The recipients were most certainly Jewish. One possible hint is the use of the term *synagogue* in James 2:2.
- The conflict over Jewish law and the conversion of the Gentiles isn't mentioned. Most likely, written before Paul's first missionary journey which began in A.D. 46.
- It is possible it was written before Peter converted Cornelius in 39 A.D.?
- Early to mid 40's

Galatians

- The central content of Galatians concerns the need for the believer in Jesus to keep the Law of Moses, especially circumcision.
 - Jews at Antioch, Iconiu, Lystra, and Derbe strongly opposed Paul's message during his first missionary journey.
 - A conflict arose between Judaizers and Gentile Christians.
 - There is no mention of the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 which addressed that issue.
- Paul's journeys to Jerusalem.
 - In Galatians Paul mentioned two visits to Jerusalem, the visit of Galatians 1:18 and 2:1. The visit of Galatians 1:18 is most likely the same visit of Paul mentioned in Acts 9:26–30, but Luke also indicated visits by Paul to Jerusalem in Acts 11:28–30 and 15:4–21. With which of these visits should we link the visit of Galatians 2:1?
 - On the one hand, if the visit of Galatians 2:1 refers to the visit of Acts 15:4–21, then it is strange that Paul did not use the decree from the Jerusalem Council to support his position in the letter. It is also unlikely that Peter would have behaved with the same degree of compromise described in Galatians 2:11–14 if the Jerusalem Council had already taken place. These elements favor identifying the visit of Galatians 2:1 with the visit of Acts 11:28–30.
 - On the other hand, the subject discussed in Galatians 2:1–10 is similar to the subject discussed in Acts 15:4–21; and the conclusion reached in Galatians 2:9–10 seems similar to the conclusion in Acts 15:22–29. However, it is still strange Paul did not mention the conference and decision with the elders in Jerusalem.
- Date of writing
 - A.D. 47 – 48
 - *From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. And they stayed there a long time with the disciples. (Ac 14:26–28)*

1 & 2 Thessalonians

- Both books were written from Corinth in A.D. 51 – 52 during Paul's 18-month stay.
- According to an inscription at Delphi, Gallio was proconsul during the twelfth year of Claudius' tribunicial power and after his twenty-sixth proclamation as Emperor. This must have been before August 52, when the twenty-seventh proclamation had already been made. As proconsuls normally took office in midsummer, it is generally supposed that midsummer of 52 must be the date of the commencement of Gallio's office. But some prefer the previous year, to allow an adequate time for the proconsul to refer some questions to the Emperor, as the inscription mentions that he did.
- It is not possible to say exactly when Paul appeared before Gallio but Acts 18:12–18 suggests that this happened shortly after Gallio assumed office and probably towards the end of Paul's eighteen months in the city. It is most probable that 1 Thessalonians was written shortly after Paul's arrival in

Corinth, and it may therefore be dated in the early part of 51 (or 50 if the earlier dating of Gallio's assumption of office is preferred).

1 Corinthians

- *But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, (1 Co 16:8)*
- It was written during Paul's time in Ephesus in Acts 19, somewhere around 2 years and 3 months.
- That would have been A.D. 52 – 55.
- It was probably closer to A.D. 55.

2 Corinthians

- *Now I am ready to visit you for the third time (2 Co 12:14)*
 - Possibly, an unrecorded trip.
 - Pauls' visits to Thessalonica
 - Acts 17
 - Acts 20:1-3
 - *Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-bye to them and went on to Macedonia. (2 Co 2:12–13)*
 - *But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever. (2 Co 7:6–7)*
 - Written A.D. 56 – 57

Romans

- Romans was written from Corinth.
 - *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. (Ro 16:1)*
 - *Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings. Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings. (Ro 16:23)*
 - *I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, (1 Co 1:14)*
 - *Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings. Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings. (Ro 16:23)*
 - Erastus in return for his aedileship laid [the pavement] at his own expense."
 - *Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus. (2 Ti 4:20)*
- *But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while. (Ro 15:23–24)*
 - This statement should be linked back to Acts 20:1-3
- Romans was written from Corinth somewhere around A.D. 57 – 58.

Prison Epistles: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon

- Where was Paul in prison?
 - Philippi (Acts 16:23-40) – A.D. 49/50

- Ephesus? – A.D. 52 -55
- Jerusalem (Acts 21:33 – 23:30) – A.D. 57
- Caesarea (Acts 23:35 – 26:32) – A.D. 57-59
- Rome (Acts 28:16-31) – A.D. 60-62
- *All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar’s household. (Php 4:22)*
- *As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. (Php 1:13)*
- By the first Christian century *praetorium* was frequently used also to denote the Praetorian Guard, the emperor’s own elite troops, stationed in Rome.
- I think the prison epistles were written from Rome between A.D. 60-62.

Luke and Acts

- Luke was written before Acts.
 - *Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. (Lk 1:1–4)*
 - *In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach (Ac 1:1)*
- Perhaps Luke was written during Paul’s two-year imprisonment at Ceasarea (A.D. 56 – 58)
- Acts was written before the end of Paul’s Roman imprisonment. (A.D. 60 – 62)

Mark

- If the priority of Mark is accepted, it must be written before the other gospels.
- If Mark is an abstract from Matthew, it must have been written after Matthew.
- 90% of material in Mark is also found in Matthew.
- A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. (Mark 15:21 NIV)
- If this is the same Rufus as the one saluted by Paul during his third journey (Rom. 16:13), then the intended readers of Mark’s Gospel must have known the two sons of Simon. (A.D. 57-58)

Matthew

- Somewhere between A.D. 50 and 70.

The Pastoral Epistles

- Paul’s Imprisonment in Rome was between A.D. 60-62
 - Paul’s death: A.D. 64-68
- *The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. (Tt 1:5)*
 - Acts 27?
 - Probably not
 - *The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. (Tt 1:5)*

- *For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. (2 Ti 4:6)*
- The Pastoral Epistles were written after Paul's release from Roman prison (A.D. 62) and shortly before his death (A.D. 64 – 68).

Hebrews

- Readers had been Christians for a while. (5:12)
- Period of persecution or imminent persecution. (12:3-4) Maybe during time of Jewish-Roman war in A.D. 66-73.
- Most likely, before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70
- Timothy is still alive. (13:23)
- Persecution, confiscation of property, and even death might refer to Nero's persecution. (A.D. 64-68)
- Hebrews is quoted by Clement of Rome. It must have been written before A.D. 96.
- Any date between A.D. 60 and 95 is possible.
- Probably A.D. 67 – 69.

1 & 2 Peter

- Traditional date of Peter's death: A.D. 64-67
- Most logical assumption is toward the end of Peter's life.
- Time of persecution
- A.D. 65-67

Jude

- Content is similar to 2 Peter
- After? A.D. 66 – 80?

Revelation

- Date depends on interpretation
- Nero: A.D. 68
- Vespasian: A.D. 69 – 79
- Domitian: A.D. 81 - 96

1, 2, & 3 John

- Docetism
- Confirmation of Jesus in the flesh
- A.D. 80 – 95
- Ephesus

Gospel of John

- The gospel shares purpose of 1 John
- There is a strong emphasis on divinity and humanity of Jesus.
- A.D. 80 – 95
- Ephesus