

New Testament Background

323 BCE -- Alexander the Great died ... Ptolemaic Kingdom

198 BCE -- Seleucid kingdom (Book of Daniel)

In 190 BCE, the Romans defeated the Seleucid kingdom.

From 174 to 171 BCE, Jason the high priest-- the process of Hellenization

In 168 BCE Antiochus IV ordered that Jerusalem become a Hellenistic city -- outlawed Jewish religion and way of life . A pagan altar was placed upon the altar in the Temple and animals—including pigs—were sacrificed to the Olympic Zeus, and the worship of the other Greek gods was also introduced in Jerusalem and other parts of Judea

In 167 BCE -- the Maccabean revolution. In 165 BCE -- Judas Maccabeas (Hasmonean) purified and rededicated the Temple.

By 76 BCE -- the borders of the Jewish state were expanded to include all of Palestine.

In 67 BCE -- Romans take notice of an internal Jewish power and In 63 BCE – Pompey marched on Jerusalem; Pompey and Julius Caesar rule in 49 BCE

In 45 BCE -- Caesar appointed Hyrcanus II as ethnarch of the Jews, but it was Antipater, not Hyrcanus II who actually ruled in Jerusalem. (Antipater was not a Jew but an Idumean). Antipater had two sons, Phasael and Herod, both of whom were quite active militarily and politically in various capacities in Palestine and Syria.

In 44 BCE -- Caesar was murdered

In 40 BCE Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus II, allied with the Parthians, gained control of Jerusalem; a Hasmonean was once again king. Antigonus took Hyrcanus II and Phasael prisoners.

40 BCE -- Herod fled from Masada and arrived in Rome in 40 BCE.

From 37 BCE until 4, Herod reigned in Jerusalem He did not follow the Hasmonean practice of converting Gentiles to Jews

4 BCE --Herod died of an illness, and he bequeathed his kingdom to three of his sons, Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Philip.

Herod Antipas was the ruler of Perea and Galilee, when Jesus was growing up and during his public ministry. Philip the tetrarch ruled a territory that consisted of several regions, including the north eastern part of the sea of Galilee. He is not referred to directly in the New Testament, but reference is made to the city Caesarea Philippi. The name derives from "Caesar Augustus" and Philip's own name; it had a double name to distinguish it from the other Caesarea, the harbor city built by Herod the Great.

Archelaus was granted the authority to rule over Judea and Samaria, but lasted only a few years in his position, owing primarily to Jewish complaints against him to Augustus; he was removed from power in 6 and exiled to Gaul.

In 6 Archelaus' territory was placed under the direct control of the Romans under the authority of a procurator (or praefectus); one of the more historically notable of these procurators was Pontius Pilatus, who was the fifth to assume the post in 26.

For a brief time Palestine was under the rule of a single king. Agrippa I, a grandson of Herod

Composition and Arrangement of the New Testament

The New Testament is composed of twenty-seven books written by nine different authors. Based on their literary characteristics, they are often classified into three major groups—

1. **The historical** (five books, the Gospels and Acts)
2. **The epistolary** (21 books, Romans through Jude)
3. **The prophetic** (one book, Revelation).

The following two charts illustrate the division and focus of this threefold classification of the New Testament books.⁷

New Testament Books						
History	Letters					Prophecy
Matthew	Paul's				General	Revelation
	Early during missionary journeys	Later after arrest at Jerusalem			James	
Mark	Galatians	First imprisonment	Release	Second imprisonment	Hebrews	
Luke		Colossians	1 Timothy Titus	2 Timothy	Jude	
John	1 Thess. 2 Thess.	Ephesians	1 Timothy Titus	2 Timothy	1 Peter	
	1 Cor. 2 Cor.	Philemon			2 Peter	
Acts	Romans	Philippians			1 John 2 John 3 John	

An Overview as to Focus		
Historical	The Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John	Manifestation: <i>Telling the story of the coming of the Savior and His person and work.</i>
	Acts The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the apostles	Propagation: <i>Proclaiming the message of the Savior who has come.</i>

Epistolary	Epistles: Letters to churches and individuals. Romans through Jude	Explanation: <i>Developing the full significance of the person and work of Christ and how this should affect the walk of the Christian in the world.</i>
Prophetical	Revelation The apocalypse of the Lord Jesus Christ	Consummation: <i>Anticipating the end time events and the return of the Lord, His end time reign, and the eternal state.</i>

The Order of the Books of the New Testament

As seen in the previous classification, the order of the New Testament books is logical rather than chronological. As Ryrie explains,

First come the Gospels, which record the life of Christ; then Acts, which gives the history of the spread of Christianity; then the letters, which show the development of the doctrines of the church along with its problems; and finally the vision of the second coming of Christ in Revelation.⁸

Though Bible scholars differ on the exact date when the books of the New Testament were written, the order of the writing of the books was approximately as follows:

Book	Date (A.D.)	Book	Date (A.D.)
James	45-49	Philippians,	63
Galatians	49	Philemon	63-64
1 & 2 Thessalonians	51	1 Peter	63-66
Mark	50s or 60s	1 Timothy	63-66
Matthew	55	Titus	64-68
1 Corinthians	56	Hebrews	66
2 Corinthians	57-58	2 Peter	67
Romans	60	2 Timothy	68-80
Luke	61	Jude	85-90
Acts	61	John	85-90
Colossians, Ephesians		1, 2, 3 John	90-95
		Revelation	

The Collection of the Books of the New Testament

Originally, the books of the New Testament were separately circulated and only gradually collected together to form what we now know as the New Testament part of the

canon of Scripture. By preservation of God, our twenty-seven New Testament books were set apart from many other writings during the early church. They were preserved as a part of the New Testament canon because of their inspiration and apostolic authority. Ryrie has an excellent summary of this process:

After they were written, the individual books were not immediately gathered together into the canon, or collection of twenty-seven that comprise the New Testament. Groups of books like Paul's letters and the Gospels were preserved at first by the churches or people to whom they were sent, and gradually all twenty-seven books were collected and formally acknowledged by the church as a whole.

This process took about 350 years. In the second century the circulation of books that promoted heresy accentuated the need for distinguishing valid Scripture from other Christian literature. Certain tests were developed to determine which books should be included. (1) Was the book written or approved by an apostle? (2) Were its contents of a spiritual nature? (3) Did it give evidence of being inspired by God? (4) Was it widely received by the churches?

Not all of the twenty-seven books that were eventually recognized as canonical were accepted by all the churches in the early centuries, but this does not mean that those that were not immediately or universally accepted were spurious. Letters addressed to individuals (Philemon, 2 and 3 John) would not have been circulated as widely as those sent to churches. The books most disputed were James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Philemon, but ultimately these were included, and the canon was certified at the Council of Carthage in A.D. 397.

Although no original copy of any of the writings that comprise the New Testament has survived, there exist more than 4,500 Greek manuscripts of all or part of the text, plus some 8,000 Latin manuscripts and at least 1,000 other versions into which the original books were translated. Careful study and comparison of these many copies has given us an accurate and trustworthy New Testament.