

SESSION SIX

What was the Early Church?

1

The New Testament Canon

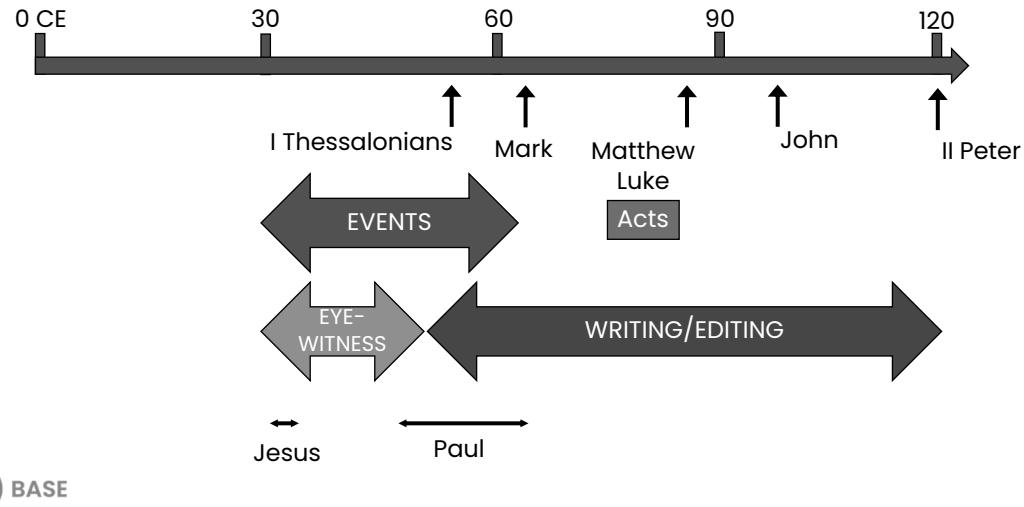
First assembled by Athanasius (Bishop of Alexandria) in 367

Matthew	II Thessalonians	Gospels History Letters Apocalyptic
Mark	I Timothy	
Luke	II Timothy	
John	Titus	
Acts of the Apostles	Philemon	
Romans	Hebrews	
I Corinthians	James	
II Corinthians	I Peter	
Galatians	II Peter	
Ephesians	I John	
Philippians	II John	
Colossians	III John	
I Thessalonians	Jude	
	Revelation	

BASE

2

The New Testament

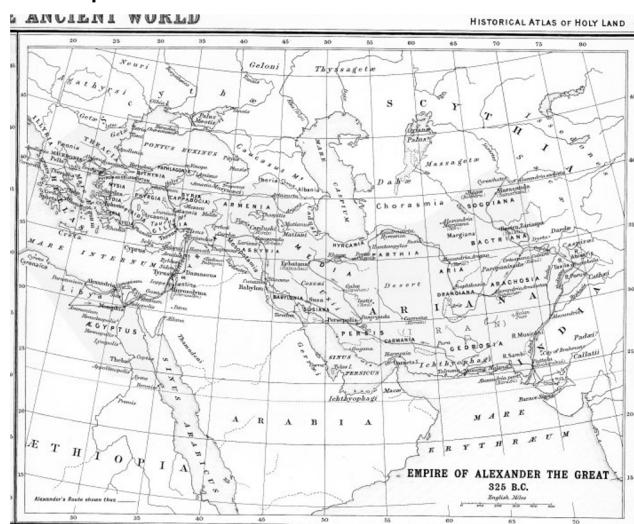


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It's All Greek to Me

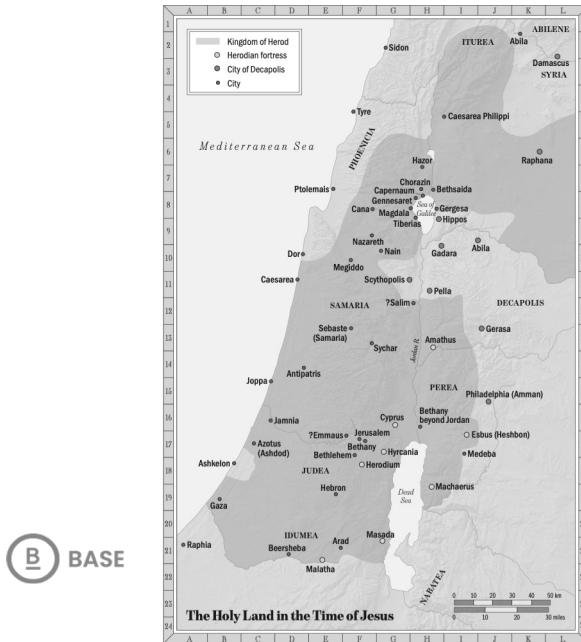
The New Testament was written entirely in Greek
 The Empire of Alexander the Great (~320 BC)

 **BASE**



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The Political Situation



<https://open.bible/maps/>

Galilee was ruled by

Herod Antipas

Judea was ruled by Roman prefects:

Valerius Gratus and Pontius Pilate,

all under Augustus Caesar

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The Jewish Situation

- Near Jerusalem, Jewish worship centered around the Temple
- Beyond Judea, Jews lived as a religious minority in a Greek culture ruled by Rome
- Worship took place in synagogues

Sadducees

- Conservative, attached to the Temple in Jerusalem
- Believed there was no resurrection

Essenes

- Lived apart
- Dead Sea Scrolls

Pharisees

- Not connected to the Temple; lived with the people
- Believed in the resurrection



6

Acts – The History of the Early Church (by Luke!)

- 30s-40s
 - Acts 1-5 : Pentecost and the Ministry in Jerusalem
 - Acts 6-7: Ministry and martyrdom of Stephen
 - Acts 8-12: Scattering of the church; Ministry in Samaria and Judea
 - Acts 13-14: Paul's first missionary journey, with Barnabas
- 50s-64
 - Acts 15: The Jerusalem Council
 - Acts 16-18: Paul's second missionary journey
 - Acts 18-21: Paul's third missionary journey
 - Acts 21-26: Paul's arrest and various trials
 - Acts 27-28: Paul's journey to Rome

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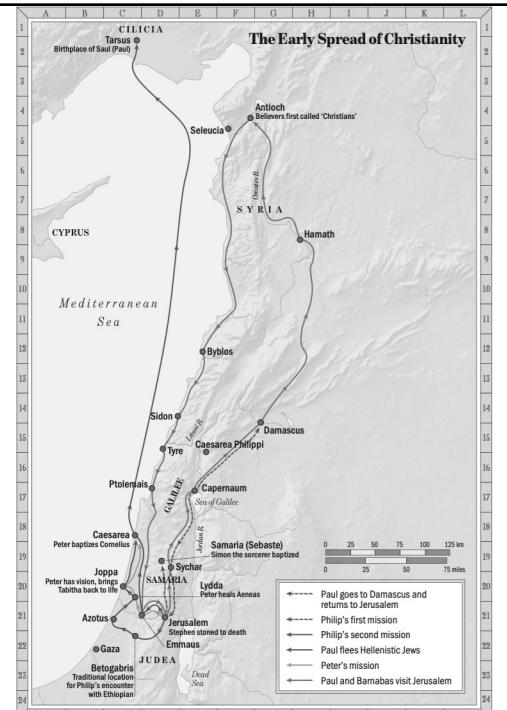
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The 30s

- After Stephen's death, the church scattered north
- The term "Christian" was first used in Antioch
- Christians were largely Jewish
- Some "God-fearing" Gentiles also became converts
- Christians faced increasing persecution

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Peter's Vision

⁹ About noon the next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. ¹⁰ He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while it was being prepared he fell into a trance. ¹¹ He saw the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. ¹² In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air. ¹³ Then he heard a voice saying, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." ¹⁴ But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean." ¹⁵ The voice said to him again, a second time, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." ¹⁶ This happened three times, and the thing was suddenly taken up to heaven.

--Acts 10:9-16

Luke pairs this vision with the conversion of Cornelius, a gentile centurion.

²⁵ On Peter's arrival, Cornelius met him and, falling at his feet, worshipped him. ²⁶ But Peter made him get up, saying, "Stand up; I am only a mortal." ²⁷ And as he talked with him, he went in and found that many had assembled, ²⁸ and he said to them, "You yourselves know that it is improper for a Jew to associate with or to visit an outsider, but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean." --Acts 10:25-28



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The Conversion of Saul

Now as [Saul] was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."

--Acts 9:3-6

Saul → Paul



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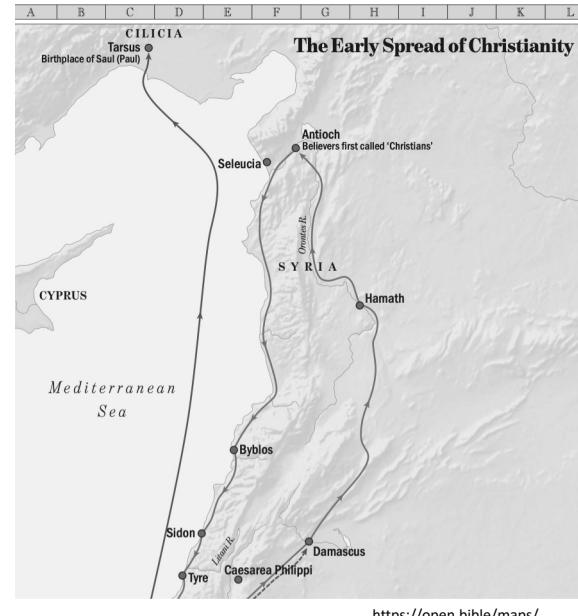
Who was Paul?

- A Hellenized Jew, born in Tarsus
- A Pharisee; a student of Gamaliel

“I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to our ancestral law, being zealous for God, just as all of you are today.”

--Acts 22:3

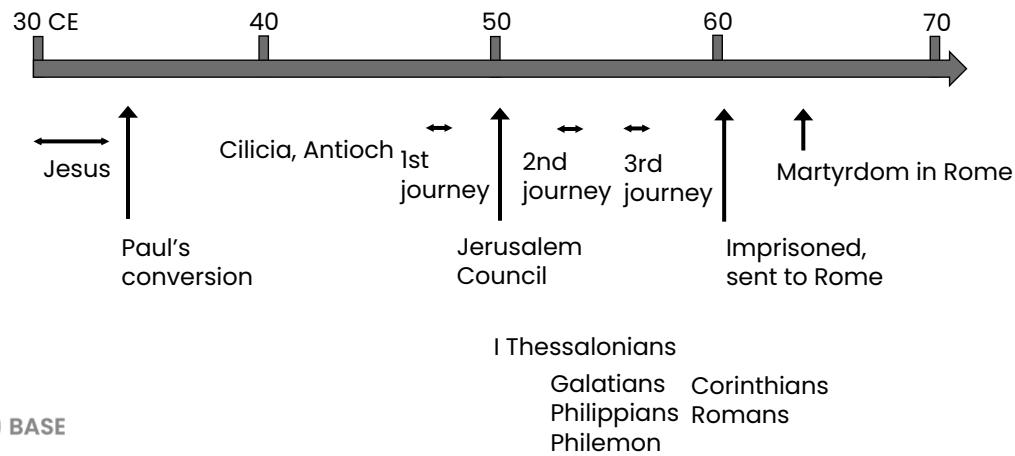
- A Roman citizen by birth
- A tentmaker, or leatherworker
- The most prolific writer in the New Testament
- A passionate, tireless missionary and pastor
- The premier Christian theologian
- Apostle to the Gentiles



<https://open.bible/maps/>

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Paul's Career



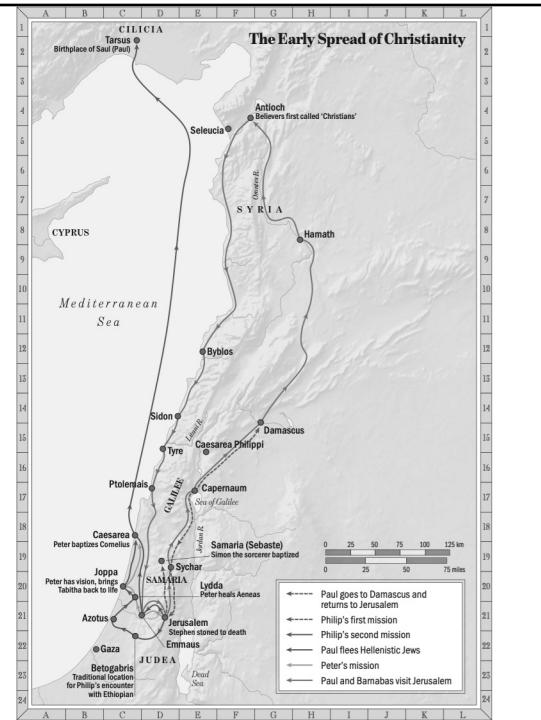
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The 40s

- Paul spent most of his time near Antioch and Cilicia, away from Jerusalem
- Paul developed and honed his teaching and theology
- More Gentiles became Christian



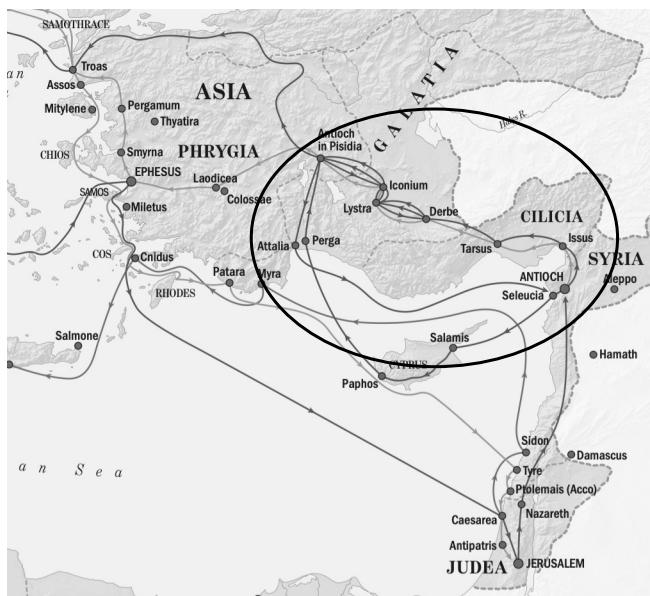
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Paul's First Journey

46-49 CE



Started in
Antioch

Notable stops:
Cyprus
Cities in
Galatia

Ended back in
Antioch

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The Jerusalem Council

49 CE

Must one become a Jew first before becoming a Christian?
(Should Christianity remain within Judaism?)

Several Pharisees said yes; Paul and Barnabas said no.

James decided the matter:

“Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood.”

--Acts 15:19-20



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Mission to the Gentiles

- After the Jerusalem Council, Paul was “unleashed” across the Gentile world, and he launched a great missionary campaign
- This campaign founded a great many churches both directly and indirectly
- Paul’s strategy was to start in synagogues, then go to the Gentiles
- Paul was joined on these journeys by various companions, some of which remained behind to continue supporting new churches
- Paul wrote letters back to churches to encourage and instruct



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