

LAST GENERATION VERSION

Order of New Testament Books

The books of the New Testament were not only written and/or authorized by Jesus' own Apostles, but their number was also fixed by them. The New Testament books bear witness to each other in many regards. For example, James quoted Matthew's Gospel,¹ Paul quoted Luke's Gospel,² and Jude quoted Peter.³

Paul's last letter, 2 Timothy, written during his second Roman imprisonment, bears witness to his authorizing a fixed set of his own books,⁴ having Luke, Timothy, and Mark as his faithful assistants. A year later, right after Paul's execution in Rome, Peter wrote his two letters from his prison cell in Rome, the first addressed to his Jewish brothers and the second addressed to the Gentile brothers formerly under Paul. In the second letter, Peter made it clear that he was in the process of preparing a permanent record for the assemblies: "*And I will be diligent also for you to always have the reminder of these things⁵ after my exit.*"⁶ He then pronounced the complete collection⁷ of Paul's letters as sacred "Scripture,"⁸ a term used in the Bible only for works that were considered "God-breathed."

After Peter's execution that same year, John took up the task of appending his own authorized works to the collection established by Paul and Peter. In his first epistle, which all biblical scholars acknowledge was written after James, Paul, and Peter were dead, John wrote about the collective written testimony of the Apostles who were dead.

1 John 1:1-4 (LGV) 1 The one [who] was from the beginning, the one we have heard, the one we have seen with our eyes, the one we examined and our hands handled regarding

¹ Jesus words in Matt. 5:34-36, were quoted in James 5:12.

² Jesus' words "*do this in remembrance of Me*" recorded only in Luke 22:19 were quoted by Paul in 1 Cor. 11:24-25.

³ Jude 1 is heavily dependent on 2 Peter. 2.

⁴ 2 Tim. 4:11-13

⁵ In context, "these things" referred to the eyewitness testimony of Peter and John on the Mt. of Transfiguration.

⁶ 2 Pet. 1:15

⁷ 2 Pet. 3:15-16 The aorist tense of the verb in the clause translated "*the wisdom that was given to him [Paul]*" implies that Paul was no longer living. Also, the clause "*all of his [Paul's] letters*" implies a fixed recognized collection and that no more would be forthcoming from Paul.

⁸ 2 Pet. 3:16 Peter's reference to "*the rest of the Scriptures*" in connection with Paul's books shows that he placed Paul's works in the same category as the Old Testament prophets. This was likely a reference to Paul's own statement in 2 Tim. 3:14-17.

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Logos of Life, 2 (and the Life was made apparent, and we have seen, and we witness and report to you the age-enduring Life who was with the Father and was made apparent to us). 3 The one we have seen and have heard we report also to you so that you also may have fellowship with us. And yet this fellowship of ours is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus the Anointed. 4 And we write these things to you so that your joy may be having been filled.

The only way that John, the last living Apostle, could indicate that “we” (the eyewitnesses) are reporting (present tense) and **writing** (present tense) these things is if he was referring to the collection of written documents that would live on after the Apostles themselves. In his last book, John recorded the warning against adding to or taking away from “*the prophecy of this book.*”⁹ While “this book” may refer only to the book of Revelation, adding anything “prophetic” (what Paul referred to as “God-breathed”¹⁰) to the last book written by the last living Apostle would bring dire consequences. Thus, what Paul and Peter referred to as New Testament “Scripture” was on the same authoritative level as Moses and the Prophets.¹¹

At the end of the apostolic age, what we call the “New Testament” was simply a collection of scrolls, copied from the original documents retained by the local assemblies to which each was originally addressed, and recognized as the authoritative, complete collection of inspired writings. These twenty-seven books were being copied and circulated among the local assemblies. But the individual scrolls had no specified or authorized order. However, the second-century invention of the “codex” (bound-leaf books) provided the means to bring together multiple letters in a single bound book. Christians immediately began to transcribe and bind multiple individual apostolic documents (scrolls) into a single codex in order to make efficient use of expensive parchment in a form that was easy to transport and easy to reference. This required that individual books be arranged in some sort of order for binding. The earliest arrangements were either by category or by authorship, such as a single codex containing all four Gospels and Acts,¹² and a single codex containing the entire collection of Paul’s fourteen letters.¹³ Not until the fourth century after Christ do we find relatively complete New Testaments contained in a single codex. Consequently, while

⁹ Rev. 22:18-19

¹⁰ 2 Tim. 3:16

¹¹ 2 Pet. 1:19-21

¹² The oldest extant copy containing all four Gospels and Acts is P⁴⁵ (Circa AD 250), originally about 220 pages.

¹³ The oldest extant copy of Paul’s works, P⁴⁶ (Circa AD 200) placed Hebrews immediately after Romans, and Galatians after Ephesians.

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there is apostolic authority for all of the individual books in our New Testaments, there is no apostolic authority for the placement order of books.

The book order of our modern New Testaments was standardized by Jerome who in AD 382 was commissioned by pope Damasus I of Rome to revise the old Latin¹⁴ Gospels using the best Greek copies. Upon completing the four Gospels, Jerome then set out to do the same with the remaining books of the New Testament. He then eventually completed a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Latin as well. This whole Latin Bible became known as the “Latin Vulgate,” and has been the standard biblical text of Roman Catholicism for many centuries. Jerome appears to have followed a book order for the New Testament found in some of the Alexandrian copies of his day, except for the placement of Hebrews.

Many modern scholars have acknowledged that the order of books in the Latin Vulgate does not reflect the consensus of earlier Christianity. This conclusion is based not only on the surviving manuscripts themselves, but also on many statements of the early Church Fathers concerning the early order of the books. The consensus is that the earliest whole New Testaments generally had the following order: The four Gospels, Acts, James, 1,2 Peter, 1,2,3 John, Jude, Paul’s 14 letters (with Hebrews between 2 Thessalonians & 1 Timothy), Revelation.¹⁵ The placement of Paul’s letters following Acts (beginning with Romans) was apparently intended to place Rome at the head of the Christian assemblies in authority, and to diminish the original “mother-assembly” (Jerusalem) by placing the letters of James and 1 Peter (both addressed to Jewish audiences) in the rear. We see this order appearing first in certain Alexandrian copies.¹⁶

The Jewish and early Christians considered the order within lists to have great importance. Lists of names or titles were never random, but were ordered by priority. When listing persons, the order was given either by chronology, by individual age, by generation, or by perceived importance. But some sort of priority was always intended in lists.

¹⁴ Beginning in the second century, many different Christians translated individual NT books or collections of books from Greek to Latin. Due to the varying skill of these translators, the early Latin New Testaments contained many variant readings. The entire collection of early Latin texts became known as “Vetus Latina” (Old Latin).

¹⁵ See Martin, Ernest L, *Restoring the Original Bible*, pp. 7-28. P⁷⁴ is an example of James, Peter, and John following Acts.

¹⁶ The 4th or 5th cent. mss., codex Siniaticus, codex Vaticanus, and codex Alexandrinus, all have Romans following Acts, and Hebrews is between 2 Thessalonians and 1 Timothy. But the earlier collection of Paul’s works, P⁴⁶ (Circa AD 200), placed Hebrews between Romans and 1 Corinthians.

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An important question facing a translator of the New Testament is whether to continue the Roman Catholic tradition, which virtually all modern Bibles follow, or to use the more ancient order for the books. And if a different order is to be used, what kind of priority should be given to the books? If the intent is for the reader to understand the Scriptures historically (which is necessary for accuracy in interpretation), then the order of the books ought to reflect the priority established by Jesus Himself for the spread of the Gospel. Jesus said, *"I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*¹⁷ Yet He acknowledged that *"even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."*¹⁸ When commissioning His Apostles, Jesus told them, *"you will be witnesses to Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the ends of the land."*¹⁹ Peter acknowledged that priority was to be given to the Jews first,²⁰ as did Paul.²¹ Consequently, those books intended for a Jewish audience ought to be placed first.

It is also acknowledged by virtually all biblical commentators that the four Gospels were written at different times, for specific audiences. Matthew is clearly the "Jewish" Gospel, presenting Jesus in a way that would be most familiar to the Jews, frequently quoting Old Testament prophecies as being fulfilled by the events of Jesus' life. According to several of the earliest witnesses, Matthew originally wrote his Gospel in the language of the Jews (Aramaic), and it was afterward translated into Greek.²² Since this was the language spoken primarily in Judea, Matthew would have been the Gospel of the Jerusalem assembly. Mark's Gospel is known to be a compilation of sayings from Peter's oral sermons, recorded and assembled by his scribe, John Mark. The Gospel of Luke was written by Paul's companion and is referred to in Paul's works as "my Gospel."²³ The Gospel of John was written after the deaths of the other Apostles, and was intended to support Paul's prior teaching to the Gentiles.

The Last Generation Version

The intended goal for the LGV is to make the New Testament easier for Bible expositors to accurately interpret and expound, understanding the text accurately according to the nuances of the Greek grammar and syntax, and within the historical setting. Since the

¹⁷ Matt. 15:24

¹⁸ Matt. 15:27

¹⁹ Acts 1:8

²⁰ Acts 3:26

²¹ Acts 13:46; Rom. 1:16; Rom. 2:9-10

²² This fact has been attested by several of the earliest Christian writers. Eusebius of Caesarea (4th cent.) was personally familiar with a copy of the Aramaic Matthew. Eusebius also quoted Papias (1st cent.) concerning Matthew as follows: *"So then Matthew wrote the oracles in the Hebrew language, and every one interpreted them as he was able."* (Eusebius, History, Vol. 3, ch. 39:14-17).

²³ Rom. 2:16; Rom. 16:25; 2 Tim. 2:8

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order of the books was not fixed by the Apostles, the most logical and beneficial format seems to be a further expansion of what Luke stated as his intention at the beginning of His Gospel, to set out an “orderly account.”²⁴ He then wrote a chronological account of the life and ministry of Jesus. He followed this with the Acts of the Apostles which also flows chronologically. Acts begins with Jesus’ ascension, then the forming of the assembly at Jerusalem, then the outreach of the Jerusalem assembly to the Samaritans, then to Cornelius’ household. This is followed by Paul’s conversion and commission, and his subsequent missionary journeys to the west all the way to Rome. Thus Luke – Acts provides the chronological overview for the bulk of the New Testament.

The four Gospels were intended to fill four different needs, each associated with a different aspect of the spread of the Gospel. Each of the four Gospels seem perfectly fitted to introduce a four-part division of the entire New Testament. Matthew was certainly the Gospel used by the Jerusalem assembly, having been originally written in Aramaic, the language of the Jews. It was probably written for use by that assembly in their outreach to the community around Judea. James, being the brother of Jesus and pastor of the Jerusalem assembly, was in the earliest days considered first in priority in the Jerusalem assembly, even though he was not one of the Twelve.²⁵ When Paul went up to Jerusalem to receive the blessing of the Apostles and elders on his ministry, he listed the “pillars” of the Jerusalem assembly as “James, Kaphas (Peter), and John.”²⁶ Thus, Paul viewed James as having the chief place in the Jerusalem assembly, and Peter after him, and John after him. Peter and John, being Apostles of Jesus, were charged with evangelism. James, on the other hand, was the primary “shepherd” of the flock in Judea.

Therefore, the LGV places the books of the New Testament into four sections, each headed by one of the four Gospels.

I. Section one begins with Matthew, introducing the life of Christ from a Jewish perspective. Since Acts 1-12 gives the activities of Peter in forming and initially leading the Jerusalem assembly (followed by James’ leadership), Acts is divided into 1 Acts and 2 Acts. First Acts follows after Matthew, and contains Acts 1-12. This is followed by James who was made pastor of the Jerusalem assembly fairly quickly after that assembly was begun by Peter’s preaching. Then Jude follows,

²⁴ Luke 1:1-4

²⁵ Note the priority in listing the names. In Acts 12:17 Peter said, “Go tell these things to James and to the brothers.” In Acts 15:13ff, James gave the final decision regarding the Jerusalem council. In Acts 21:18, Paul went to meet with James and all the elders. In Gal. 2:9, Paul gives a clear priority in the Jerusalem assembly, James, then Peter, then John.

²⁶ Gal. 2:9

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as James' younger brother²⁷ who wrote after James was martyred in Jerusalem in AD 62, and after Peter's martyrdom in AD 67,²⁸ around the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. These four books give the best overview of the life and ministry of the Jerusalem assembly.

II. The second section begins with Mark²⁹ who was Peter's scribe. Mark's Gospel contains his recollections of the life of Jesus from hearing Peter's preaching after the Jerusalem assembly was placed in James' hands. Peter's comments concerning the Transfiguration³⁰ closely follow Mark's account.³¹ Peter was a bridge between the Jerusalem assembly and Paul's ministry, as he was the first to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles at the home of Cornelius. But after this, Peter's mission was directed primarily towards the Jews of the Diaspora.³² This section includes 1 Peter which is also directed to believers from this group. But it is followed immediately by 2 Peter which was written just after Paul's execution, and is then addressed to Gentiles who were the beneficiaries of Paul's ministry. It ends with a full endorsement of "*all of his [Paul's] letters.*"

III. The third section begins with Luke's Gospel which gives a chronological account of the life of Jesus. Luke was Paul's companion, and addressed both his Gospel and Acts to a Gentile called "*most excellent Theophilus,*" likely a government official³³ who converted to Christ due to Paul's missionary outreach. Luke's Gospel was copied and left in many of the Gentile assemblies that Paul established. In the LGV, Luke is followed by 2 Acts which gives a chronological account of Paul's missionary journeys. This provides the historical framework for all of Paul's letters which are then placed in chronological order.

IV. Finally, the fourth section deals with the ministry of John, beginning with his Gospel, then his three letters. These books were written from Ephesus after Paul's death, intending to reinforce Paul's teaching to the Gentiles of Asia Minor and to oppose the Gnostic heresies that were arising among the gentile

²⁷ Jude 1:1

²⁸ Peter spoke of false teachers as coming shortly (future tense) in 2 Pet. 2. But Jude wrote to warn that they had already arrived, referencing Peter (Jude 1:4-19).

²⁹ Mark was a cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10). The prayer meeting for Peter's release from prison was held in Mark's mother's house (Acts 12:12). Peter referred to Mark as "my son" (1 Pet. 5:13), leading many to conclude that Mark was Peter's nephew.

³⁰ 2 Pet. 1:16-21

³¹ Mark 9:1-9

³² Gal. 2:1-9

³³ He is addressed using a Roman title of great importance, "Most Excellent Theophilus" (Luke 1:3).

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assemblies. Revelation was John's last work, written while he was imprisoned on Patmos around AD 96, and includes the seven letters dictated by Jesus to the seven assemblies of Asia Minor.

The Chronological Order of Paul's Letters

Jerome placed Paul's letters in a sequence categorized by his own perceived importance, nearly following an order in a few earlier manuscripts. Jerome placed Paul's letters written to particular assemblies first, followed by his personal letters (to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, ordered by length). Rome was given first place mainly because the assembly at Rome had quickly become the most prominent, being in the capitol city of the Roman Empire. The book of Romans was also considered the most "theological" of Paul's works, (although Hebrews and Galatians certainly rival it in theological importance). Our modern Bibles follow Jerome's order. Very little attention has been given to arranging Paul's letters in the order in which they were written corresponding to Luke's sequential account of his missionary journeys in Acts. The LGV presents Paul's letters in the order in which they were written, being linked to the corresponding portion in Acts which provides the historical setting for that letter. The following explanation provides the LGV sequence of Paul's letters and the reasoning behind it.

1. *Galatians* was written about AD 48 from Antioch shortly after Paul had completed his first missionary journey to that region.³⁴ Galatians was written to counter the Judaizers from the Jerusalem assembly who were following behind Paul and undermining his teachings concerning Christians not being obligated to keep the Law of Moses. It is apparent that Paul wrote Galatians before the Jerusalem Council was convened to address this problem. Otherwise, Paul would have certainly appealed to their decision and the encyclical letter³⁵ issued by the Jerusalem council against the Judaizers and in support of Paul's teaching. In the opening chapters of Galatians, Paul described his encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road,³⁶ his personal instruction by Jesus in Arabia,³⁷ his first trip back to Jerusalem three years after his conversion,³⁸ his preaching in Syria and Cilicia,³⁹ and his second trip back to Jerusalem fourteen years after his conversion.⁴⁰ During Paul's stay in Jerusalem Herod Agrippa died,⁴¹ after which

³⁴ Acts 13:1 – Acts 14:28

³⁵ Acts 15:23-29

³⁶ Gal. 1:13-16, cf. Acts 9:1-20

³⁷ Gal. 1:17, cf. Acts 9:22a

³⁸ Gal. 1:18-19, cf. Acts 9:27-30

³⁹ Gal. 1:21-24

⁴⁰ Gal. 2:1-10, cf. Acts 11:29-30

⁴¹ Acts 12:20-24

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Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch.⁴² This fixes Paul's second visit to Jerusalem in AD 44, the year of Herod's death, which is fourteen years after Pentecost. This is when James, Peter, and John gave Paul "*the right hand of fellowship*" and officially recognized Paul as Jesus' Apostle to the Gentiles.⁴³ Upon Paul's arrival back in Antioch, Jesus officially sent Paul as His Apostle on his first missionary journey, going west and evangelizing the area of southern Galatia.⁴⁴ Galatians was therefore written from Antioch after Paul's first missionary journey to Galatia, but just before his third trip to Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15. The statement in Gal. 6:17 that "*I bear in my body the marks of the Master, Jesus,*" refers to Paul's stoning at Lystra⁴⁵ which many of the Galatians had witnessed.

2. **1 Thessalonians** was written during Paul's second missionary journey, shortly after he established an assembly at Thessalonica.⁴⁶ After leaving Thessalonica, Paul went to Berea where he established an assembly. He left Silas and Timothy at Berea, and traveled alone to Athens. He sent word back to Berea for Silas and Timothy to join him.⁴⁷ Paul then went on ahead to Corinth a short distance away.⁴⁸ Timothy and Silas caught up with Paul at Corinth⁴⁹ and were present with him when he wrote 1 Thessalonians from Corinth.⁵⁰ Paul continued in Corinth for eighteen months.⁵¹ Paul desired to visit Thessalonica again on his return trip, "*but Satan hindered us.*"⁵² These events are described as taking place in Corinth.⁵³

3. **2 Thessalonians** was also written from Corinth shortly after the first letter to correct a misunderstanding concerning the first letter.⁵⁴ Timothy and Silas were still with Paul.⁵⁵

⁴² Acts 12:25

⁴³ Gal. 2:7-10

⁴⁴ Acts 13:1-3

⁴⁵ Acts 14:19-20

⁴⁶ Acts 17:1-9

⁴⁷ Acts 17:14-15

⁴⁸ Acts 18:1

⁴⁹ Acts 18:1-5; 1 Thess. 3:6

⁵⁰ 1 Thess. 1:1

⁵¹ Acts 18:11

⁵² 1 Thess. 2:17-18

⁵³ Acts 18:12-17

⁵⁴ 2 Thess. 2:1-6

⁵⁵ 2 Thess. 1:1

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4. *1 Corinthians* was written from Ephesus during Paul's third missionary journey.⁵⁶ Paul had passed through Galatia⁵⁷ and arrived in Ephesus where he spent just over two years teaching in the school of Tyranus.⁵⁸ Paul wrote *1 Corinthians* shortly before leaving Ephesus, intending to pass through Macedonia and arrive at Corinth to collect the donation for the saints at Jerusalem.⁵⁹ He intended to leave just after Pentecost (June), and arrive in Corinth before winter.⁶⁰ However, after dispatching this letter, he was delayed by the events described in Acts 19:21-41.

5. *2 Corinthians* was written after Paul resumed his trip towards Corinth, passing through Macedonia where he left Luke behind to help the Philippian assembly.⁶¹ This letter was written from Berea or Athens on his way to Corinth, since it is clear that he had just collected the donations from the Macedonian assemblies, and was sending word on ahead to Corinth to have their donation ready.⁶² Less than a full year had passed since writing the previous letter.⁶³

6. *Romans* was written after Paul had collected the donations from the Macedonian assemblies and from Corinth in Achaia.⁶⁴ After leaving Corinth, Paul backtracked through Macedonia (Berea, Thessalonica) and then spent Passover with the Philippian assembly⁶⁵ and picked up Luke from there.⁶⁶ When writing *Romans*, Paul was still intending to visit Rome as a free man right after he delivered the donation to the Jerusalem assembly on Pentecost.⁶⁷ He was not yet aware that he would be arrested at Jerusalem and detained in Caesarea. However, when he spoke to the Ephesian elders shortly after leaving Philippi, he had become aware of his impending arrest at Jerusalem, saying: *"now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except*

⁵⁶ Acts 19:10; 1 Cor. 16:8

⁵⁷ Acts 18:23; 1 Cor. 16:1

⁵⁸ Acts 19:8-10

⁵⁹ 1 Cor. 16:1-8

⁶⁰ 1 Cor. 16:5-8

⁶¹ This deduced from the fact that when writing Acts, Luke referred to their activities in the first person plural (we/us). But from Paul's departure from Philippi heading for Greece (Acts 17:1) until he returned to Philippi (Acts 20:4), Luke spoke of those events using the third person (they/them). He then resumed using the first person plural (we/us) after he arrived back in Philippi (Acts 20:5).

⁶² Acts 20:1-3; 2 Cor. 1:16; 2 Cor. 2:13; 2 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 8:1; 2 Cor. 9:2-4

⁶³ 2 Cor. 8:10; 2 Cor. 9:2

⁶⁴ Rom. 15:22-28; Acts 20:3-4

⁶⁵ Acts 20:5-11

⁶⁶ Acts 20:6

⁶⁷ Rom. 15:28-29

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that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.”⁶⁸ Therefore, “in every city” where he was warned concerning what he would face at Jerusalem had to be those cities of Macedonia through which Paul backtracked (Berea, Thessalonica, Philippi). Consequently, Romans was written either just before or after Paul left Corinth, before hearing these warnings in the Macedonian assemblies. He desired to continue pushing west from Corinth all the way to Rome, but hand-delivering the donations from the Gentile assemblies to the Jerusalem assembly prevented him from doing so at that time.

7. *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon* were written from Rome during Paul’s first (2-year) imprisonment recorded in Acts 28. In each of these, Paul referred to himself as being in chains or a prisoner.⁶⁹ The letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians were delivered on the same trip by Tychicus⁷⁰ along with Onesimus the slave who went with Tychicus to deliver the letter of Philemon to the nearby assembly at Laodicea.⁷¹ These three letters then were written around the same time, just before Paul sent these two men back to Asia Minor. Timothy remained in prison with Paul when these letters were written.⁷²

A. *Ephesians* (the largest assembly, and longest letter – 6 chapters)

B. *Colossians* (a smaller assembly – 4 chapters)

C. *Laodicea* (Philemon, the shortest letter – 1 chapter)

8. *Philippians* and *Hebrews* were also written during Paul’s first two-year Roman imprisonment. As with the previous letters, Paul still referred to being in chains in Philippians.⁷³ In Hebrews, he referred to his former detention in Caesarea before appealing to Caesar⁷⁴ and his current location in Rome.⁷⁵ That Philippians was written late during Paul’s two-year imprisonment is evident from his comments about Epaphroditus who was a member of the Philippian assembly. Having heard of Paul’s imprisonment in Rome, the Philippian assembly sent Epaphroditus to deliver a financial donation to Paul because they had heard that he was in need of financing to pay his rent while under house

⁶⁸ Acts 20:22-23

⁶⁹ Eph. 3:1; 6:20; Col. 4:3; Philemon 1:1,9-10,13

⁷⁰ Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7

⁷¹ Col. 4:9,15-16; Philemon 1:1-2,10

⁷² Col. 1:1; Philemon 1:1

⁷³ Phil. 1:7,13,14,16

⁷⁴ Heb. 10:32-34

⁷⁵ Heb. 13:24

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arrest.⁷⁶ After arriving in Rome, it became apparent that the donation was inadequate to sustain Paul's financial needs for long. So Epaphroditus took a local job in order to provide for Paul's needs by his own labors. Over time, this led to his nearly working himself to death. After his recovery, Paul sent him home to Philippi carrying this letter,⁷⁷ which expressed Paul's gratitude for the sacrifice. Consequently, *Philippians* was written after Paul had been in prison in Rome for a significant period of time, probably close to the end of his two-year imprisonment. That *Philippians* was written before *Hebrews* is clear from the fact that Timothy was still with Paul when writing *Philippians*⁷⁸ yet he expected that Timothy's release was imminent.⁷⁹ But when writing *Hebrews*, Timothy had just been released.⁸⁰

A. *Philippians*

B. *Hebrews*

9. *Titus* and *1 Timothy* were written after Paul's release, during a short period of freedom. We have no information about Paul's travels during this time except that he spent a winter in Nicopolis, just west of Corinth,⁸¹ and sent Timothy to Ephesus while on his way to Macedonia. The chronological order of these two is impossible to determine. But we can guess that since leaving Rome, he would have arrived first in Nicopolis on his way to Macedonia. Therefore, with this assumption, and in order to keep 1 & 2 *Timothy* sequential in the LGV, we have adopted the following order.

A. *Titus*

B. *1 Timothy*

10. *2 Timothy* was Paul's final letter. Having been arrested again, Paul was imprisoned in Rome a second time. He wrote *2 Timothy* just before his execution in AD 66. Peter was also in Rome at this time, and wrote both of his letters shortly after Paul's execution.⁸² Peter was executed in Rome in AD 67.

⁷⁶ Acts 28:30

⁷⁷ Phil. 2:25-30

⁷⁸ Phil. 1:1

⁷⁹ Phil. 2:19

⁸⁰ Heb. 13:23

⁸¹ Titus 3:12

⁸² 1 Peter was addressed to the Jewish believers of the assemblies that were previously Paul's domain (1 Pet. 1:1). In 2 Peter, he spoke of Paul in the past tense (2 Pet. 3:15), and referred to Paul's letters as a complete collection (v. 16).

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Placing the New Testament books in these categories and order provides a better framework for understanding the progression of the Apostolic mission. It attaches the four Gospels to the missions that they served, providing historical setting as well as the intent of the writer of each to address a particular audience. Reading the New Testament this way from beginning to end provides a much better picture of what early Christianity actually looked like from a dynamic rather than static point of view.