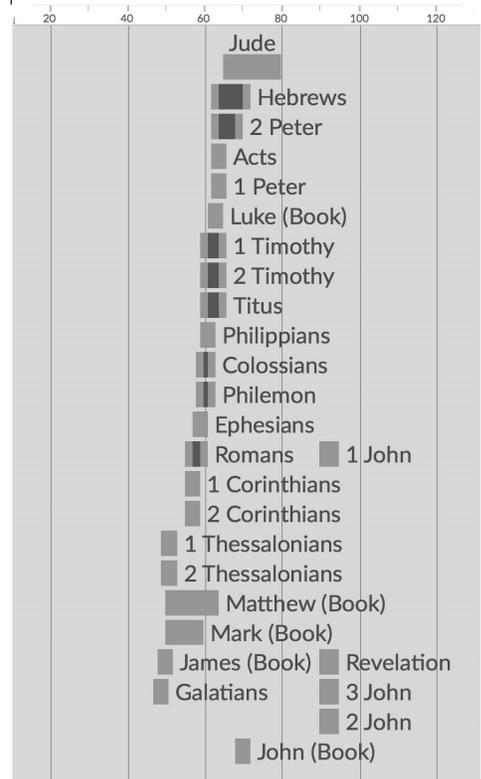


## I. Introduction

- A. The Apostolic Period: 35-120 AD
- B. The influence of the Apostles' ministry
  - 1. Apostle: from the Greek word meaning "sent one"
  - 2. Apostle as a specific title
    - a. Of Jesus: Heb. 3:1 – *Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession...*
    - b. Of the original 12: Mark 3:14 – *And he [Jesus] appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach.*
    - c. Of Paul: 1 Corin 15:7-9 – *Then he [Jesus] appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*
- C. The disciples after the ascension of Jesus – traditional information (from Robert C. Walton's *Chronological and Background Charts of Church History*)
  - 1. Peter: Late tradition speaks of visits to Britain and Gaul. Was crucified upside-down in Rome during Nero's persecution (AD 64-68)
  - 2. Andrew: Is supposed to have preached in Scythia, Asia Minor, and Greece. Was crucified at Patras in Achaia
  - 3. James son of Zebedee: executed by Herod Agrippa I
  - 4. John: ministered in Ephesus. Is said to have rebuked early Gnostic Gerinthus. Died a natural death in Ephesus (around AD 100)
  - 5. Philip: Is said to have been crucified in Hierapolis (Asia Minor)
  - 6. Matthew: Conflicting traditions place him in Ethiopia, Parthia, Persia, and Macedonia
  - 7. Thomas: Supposedly preached in Babylon. Strong early tradition tells of his founding churches and eventually being martyred in India
  - 8. Bartholomew: Supposed to have accompanied Philip to Hierapolis. Was martyred after ministry to Armenia
  - 9. James son of Alphaeus: Possibly ministered in Syria
  - 10. Simon the Zealot: Various (and dubiously) associated with Persia, Egypt, Carthage, and Britain.

## Notes



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## II. Initial persecution from the Jews

- A. The message of the Gospel was entrusted to the Jews
  - 1. Rom 1:16-17 – *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*

- The early Christians did not believe that they were following a new religion. They were Jews, and their main difference with the rest of Judaism was that they were convinced that the Messiah had come, whereas other Jews continued awaiting his advent... Their [early Christians] early proclamation to the Gentiles was not an invitation to accept a newly born religion, but rather to become participants of the promises made to Abraham and his descendants. Gentiles were invited to become children of Abraham by faith, since they could not be so by flesh.

From the point of view of those Jews who rejected Christianity... Christianity was not a new religion, but a heretical sect within Judaism...

In most of the NT it is the Jews who persecute Christians. –Justo L. González

### B. Persecution brought on by Jews

- From the Sanhedrin: Acts 5:17-42
- From Jews (in general): Acts 7:54-8:1
- From Saul (who later became Paul): Acts 8:3; 9:1-2
- Vehemence of the Jews: Acts 21:27-36 (Paul's arrest)

### C. Repercussions

- Christians found safety under Rome
  - Acts 18:14-15 – *But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. 15 But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things."*
  - Paul's words in Acts 25:11 – *"If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar."*
- Jews expelled from Rome
  - Rome didn't really know the difference between Jews and Christianity and thought their conflict with each other was an internal matter in Judaism.
  - Acts 18:2 – *And he [Paul] found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome.*

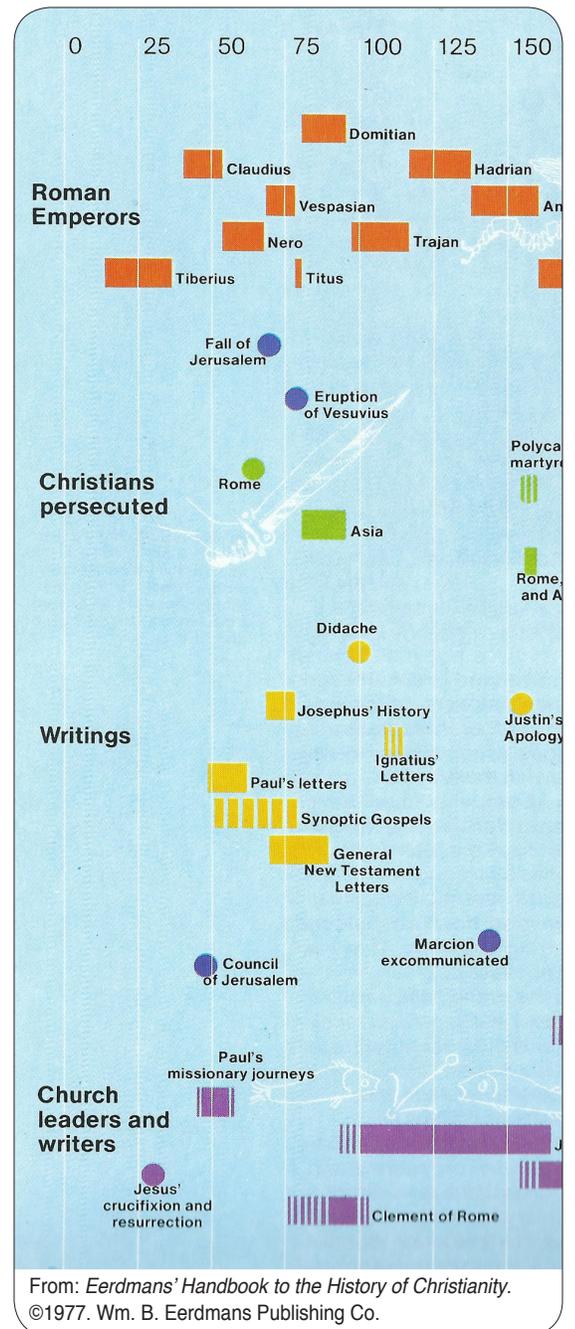
## III. Persecution from Rome

### A. Christianity emerging and growing (as distinct from Judaism)

- The Church gained more Gentile converts thus diminishing the Jew to Gentile ratio
- Jewish nationalism increased which led to rebellion against Rome

### B. Persecution to both Jews and Christians

- Emperors Nero, Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian



## Notes

2. Fall of Jerusalem in AD 70
3. Writings of Josephus (AD 37-100)

#### IV. The Fledgling Church begins to spread her wings without the original Apostles

##### A. The Apostolic Fathers

1. Clement of Rome (c. 30-100)
  - a. One of the early bishops or presbyters of early church who ministered in Rome (is perhaps mentioned in Philippians 4:3)
  - b. Wrote a letter to the church in Corinth known as *I Clement*
    - Puts stress on good order
    - Faith should be accompanied by good works
    - Written to counter a disruption and disturbance in the church, where some of the older leaders had been deposed by a younger clique (Michael A. Smith, *Eerdmans' Handbook to the History of Christianity*).
    - Martyred under Domitian
2. Ignatius of Antioch (b. ?, d. 117)
  - a. Bishop of the Church in Antioch
    - Believed he had the spiritual gift of prophecy
    - Considered himself inferior to the Apostles
    - Had strong ideas and forceful language
    - Condemned growing heresy of Docetism (belief that Jesus was pure spirit and only seemed like a man)
    - Ignatius put a high value on the Lord's Supper as a means of ensuring unity, and of stressing the reality of Jesus' becoming man (*ibid*).
    - Stressed that there should be one bishop in charge of each congregation
  - b. Taken to Rome to be executed; along the way he wrote 7 letters to the churches in: Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Rome, Philadelphia, and Smyrna

##### B. Worship

1. Worship happened in the local synagogues or in house churches
2. How synagogue worship helped shape the worship in the church
  - a. Elements of worship: adapted from OT worship at the temple
    - Public reading of the Word of God
    - Expressions of praise (songs)
    - Instruction/explanation of the Word of God
    - Confession of sin
    - Giving tithes and offerings
    - Celebration with feasting and giving to the needy
  - b. Design of synagogue which influenced church buildings
    - Always faced towards Jerusalem
    - Raised platform
    - Small replica of the Ark of the Covenant in which copies of the OT were kept
    - A lamp (menorah) for light in the back of the stage area
    - A light over the "ark"

##### C. Expansion: How the church grew rapidly

1. Greek as the unifying language and culture (Koine Greek: "common")
2. Since first Christians were Jews, they used the local synagogues for ready-made locations of evangelism
3. Gentiles who were attracted to Judaism, but didn't want to go through all the rites to become Jews, were attracted to Christianity

## Note

4. Roman roads made travel easy (and safe)
5. Pagan world was experiencing new insecurities: despairing of politics, mortality, and failed traditional religious practices
  - a. Turned to entertainment (gladiator shows)
  - b. Looked for security in intimate fellowship provided by the newly-popular Eastern religious cults
  - c. Turned to the Gospel for life and meaning
6. Early Christianity in no way depended solely upon professional leaders for its practice and growth. Each Christian was both 'priest' and 'missionary.' The churches have been described as the most inclusive and the strongest of all the various associations in the Roman world. The distinctions between Jew and Gentile, slave and freeman, male and female were in theory, and usually also in practice, abolished in the Christian community. All were active in sharing the message of Christ with others. —*Eerdmans' Handbook to the History of Christianity*

#### **IV. Why this segment of history matters (or *should matter*) to me**

- A. How does this lesson enhance your knowledge of God?
- B. In what new ways are you challenged in your own walk with Christ?
- C. How might knowing this information help you to flourish further in the grace of God?

## **Notes**