

# Route 66

## Overview of the NT: The Victory of Redemption

October 9, 2011

Today we string the NT books and their context in chronological order as best we can. Exact dates are disputed by men much smarter than me ... so, good thing *my goal* isn't to argue dates! I want to tell a story!



History records that 400 years after the last Old Testament book was written (20<sup>BC</sup>), Herod the Great announces his plans to massively renovate the temple in Jerusalem. But the *story* is a tragic tale of a mad puppet-ruler who so desperately wants to be great that he attempts to murder the newborn promised Messiah even as he's rebuilding God's temple!

It was under construction when 12-year-old Jesus ran there with his questions; when the devil tempted him to jump from it; when he chased out the money changers; and when he declared that "... one greater than the temple is here." - *Matthew 12:6b NIV*

It was surrounded by scaffolding when Jesus prophesied that a day was coming when one stone wouldn't be left on another; and when he prophesied about himself, and said

... "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" - *John 2:19b-20 NIV*



And he did. And its veil is torn from top to bottom. And his frightened disciples are hiding out when he appears to them. And this is where the book of Acts, written about 30 years later, begins. Jesus says:

... you will receive *power* when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my *witnesses* in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." - *Acts 1:8 NIV*

And this *power to witness* is the *story* of rest of the NT! Jesus appears to his unbelieving brother James (1 *Cor.* 15:7), who quickly converts. And after Pentecost, the now emboldened disciples usher in 5000 Jewish, male converts in "Jerusalem"! (*Acts* 4:4) That's when the persecution really begins!

They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. "Go, stand in the temple courts," **[still under renovation]** he said, "and tell the people the full message of this new life." - *Acts 5:18-20 NIV*

Stephen becomes the first martyr, and a young Paul holds the coats while he's stoned. (Acts 7:57-60) Paul leads the way in persecuting the church, which causes it to scatter to "all Judea and Samaria". About ten years after Jesus' resurrection, Paul, on his way to round up believers in Damascus, is *literally* knocked off his high horse (by the resurrected Christ) (Acts 9:4) and devotes the rest of his life to proclaiming the Gospel! A very kosher Peter has visions of "McRibs and Pork Rinds", and is led to the house of Cornelius (an Italian centurion), where God declares the un-chosen as co-chosen with a *gentile Pentecost!* (Acts 10)



The Epistle of James

Jesus' brother James writes to the scattered Jewish believers to remind them talk is cheap, and to encourage them to walk out their faith in the midst of their struggles.

And it's about this time (41<sup>AD</sup>) that Claudius becomes emperor of Rome.



Claudius

John's brother and fishing partner, James is the first of the twelve to be executed for his faith. He's beheaded by Herod the Great's grandson, Agrippa the Great. (Acts 12:1-3) And seeing how this pleases the Jews, Agrippa locks up Peter.

... Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains ... Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists. - Acts 12:6b-7 NIV

Paul and Barnabas set out on a missionary journey from Antioch to Cyprus to Pisidian Antioch (on the way Mark deserts them) to Iconium to Lystra and Derbe. (Acts 13:1 - 14:28) Paul and Barnabas later split over a dispute about taking Mark on another trip. (Acts 15:36-40)



The Gospel of Matthew

About 20 years after Jesus' resurrection, the early church fathers agree that Matthew, the tax collector is the first to write his Gospel.

He writes to the Jews, to demonstrate how Jesus was indeed the promised King and Son of David. His book is translated and spread far and wide.

Paul takes Silas on his 2nd missionary journey: Antioch to Tarsus to Derbe to Lystra (where Timothy joins Paul) and they end up in Philippi where Paul and Silas are locked up.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. - Acts 16:25-26 NIV

Even the jailer is converted! Then it's on to Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and a final, 18-month stop in Corinth. (Acts 15:36 - 18:22) Meanwhile, Claudius expels the Jews from Rome (49<sup>AD</sup>) for a clash over *Chrestus*. And in Corinth, Paul befriends Priscilla and Aquila (two Jewish exiles) who minister and make tents with Paul. (Acts 18:1-3)



First Thessalonians

From Corinth, Paul writes to the Thessalonians, who think those who die before Jesus comes miss out on his kingdom. And he writes again when they believe a rumor that Jesus returned and they missed it!



Second Thessalonians



First Corinthians

Paul goes home to Antioch for a while and then sets out on a 3rd journey: Antioch through Galatia and Phrygia to Ephesus (for three years) where he causes a riot. (Acts 18:23-22:30) From there he writes to the Corinthians after a disturbing report about disunity, sexual misconduct, and their turning communion into a drunken feast.



The Gospel of Mark

Back in Rome, Peter's interpreter Mark (the guy Paul and Barnabas split over) writes an action packed Gospel for a Roman audience, emphasizing Jesus as the Suffering Servant. Claudius dies (54<sup>AD</sup>), Nero becomes emperor, and the edict exiling the Jews is repealed.



Nero



Second Corinthians

Priscilla and Aquila return to Rome and host a church in their home. (Acts 16:3-5) Paul leaves Ephesus for Macedonia with Timothy and writes again to the Corinthians to reinforce his first letter, confront an attack on his authority, and to raise support for the church in Jerusalem which was experiencing a severe famine.



Paul goes back to Corinth to spend the winter.

From there he writes to the church in Rome after hearing that the 5-year-exiled Jewish believers aren't getting along with gentile believers. And he lays out faith, grace, and justification to show that Christianity isn't just for Jews.

Romans



Galatians

About this time, Paul writes to the churches in the province of Galatia after *Judaizers* convince them that salvation in Christ is only complete when they supplement it with Jewish rituals. (Acts 15:1)

Paul describes a public confrontation he has with Peter for being two-faced around *Judaizers*. (Gal 2:11-12)

About 30 years after Jesus' resurrection, Paul ends his 3rd (long) journey by going to Jerusalem where he's promptly beaten and arrested.

While they were trying to kill [Paul], news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar. He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. The commander came up and arrested him ... - Acts 21:31-33a NIV

After a couple years of incarceration Paul is shipped off to Rome for trial (Acts 27:1-2) and shipwrecked along the way. (Acts 27:39-28:10)



Ephesians

While in chains in Rome, Paul encourages his good friends in Ephesus to imitate Christ while confronting evil.

He thanks the Philippians (who have helped him financially) and *he* urges *them* to rejoice!



Philippians



Colossians

He writes to the Colossians when their leader arrives and reports that they're under attack by many false teachers. And he writes to Philemon (in Colossae) to forgive a runaway slave who's become a believer.



Philemon



The Gospel of Luke

Paul spends a couple years in Rome (much of it under house arrest) accompanied by a Christian physician named Luke who writes an incredibly detailed Gospel. There's a theory that Paul's rhetorician (like a lawyer) in Rome, was *Theophilus*.



Acts

Theophilus was the man Luke addresses both his Gospel *and* his book of Acts to. If true, this gentile doctor's investigation would've helped a Roman court to understand why Paul (a Roman citizen) was traveling the empire doing what he was doing. This theory would explain why Acts ends so abruptly before Paul's final trial and verdict.



First Peter

About this time, Jesus' brother James is thrown from the temple roof after refusing to publically blaspheme the name of Christ. And Peter writes his first letter from *Babylon*, to encourage persecuted believers and to offer them hope in the midst of their suffering.



First Timothy

Paul is released from prison in Rome, he goes to Macedonia, and he writes to Timothy, who's getting an ulcer from all the opposition as he leads the churches in Ephesus. Paul then writes a similar letter of support, instruction, and encouragement to Titus who is dealing with Cretans on a former *pirate* island.



After 80+ years, work on the temple complex is *finally* finished!



Then, on July 18, 64<sup>AD</sup>, Rome burns and Nero blames, hunts down, and savagely persecutes the Christians.

Titus

Hebrews



The book of Hebrews uses the Old Testament to argue the vast superiority of Christ, in order to dissuade Jewish believers from returning to their former, safer, *invalid* covenant. Peter makes an impassioned plea (in his second letter) to reject heresy, to hold onto truth, and to live in light of Jesus' return! Jesus' brother Jude warns of those who entice us to mock God by abusing his grace.

Second Peter



Paul is off the radar for three years; but Clement, Bishop of Rome (in a letter to the Corinthians in 95<sup>AD</sup>) says that "Paul taught righteousness to the whole world, even reaching the bounds of the West." (1 Clement 5:6) This would indicate either Spain, or even England! And either way, it certainly qualifies as: "the ends of the earth".

In 66<sup>AD</sup> a Jewish revolt gets underway and Rome destroys the Qumran Community that has hidden the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Apostle John moves to Ephesus, quite possibly taking Mary (the mother of Jesus).



Around 67<sup>AD</sup>, Paul is rearrested. He writes again to Timothy and waxes nostalgic, calling Timothy his "dear son" and recalling the faith of his mother and grandmother.

He tells Timothy he has fought the good fight, finished his race, and kept the faith!

Second Timothy

Tradition holds that Matthew, after taking the Gospel to modern day Ethiopia, was executed there for his faith. And Peter, after denying Jesus three times, would never deny him again, even when facing his own crucifixion, from Nero, in Rome.

Paul, once lead persecutor of the faithful, was beheaded at Nero's command for spreading his faith throughout Rome. That next year, Nero committed suicide (68<sup>AD</sup>). Andrew the disciple who introduced his brother Peter to Jesus is reported to have been hung on an olive tree after preaching in what is now the Ukraine, Romania, and Russia.



Bartholomew takes the Gospel to India where he's flayed alive.

August 30, 70<sup>AD</sup>, about 40 years after Jesus' resurrection (and just after its completion) Titus (son of the new emperor) desecrates and destroys Herod the Great's temple. And not one stone is left on another.



The huge menorah and the repaired or replaced temple veil are displayed in a victory parade.

Early writings hold that “doubting” Thomas is burned alive for his faith, in India, after spreading the Gospel there. And Thaddeus, according to tradition, was beaten to death in Beirut.



Simon the Zealot, after himself reaching the ends of the earth was crucified for his unyielding claims about Christ.

936 Jewish rebels commit suicide atop Masada following a two year siege by the Romans.



Pompeii is destroyed when Mount Vesuvius erupts (79<sup>AD</sup>). And in 81<sup>AD</sup> the Arch of Titus celebrates the destruction of the Temple. And Titus’ cruel brother, Domitian becomes the emperor of Rome.



Philip, after teaching throughout Greece is said to have preached while crucified upside down.



John, the last living Apostle, writes his own Gospel to make sure that everyone knows that Jesus was, without question, the Son of God.

And in his 1st letter he deals with the antichrists who deny it.



The Gospel of John

First John



In his 2nd letter, the aging John warns the churches to watch out for these antichrists.

And in his 3rd letter he condemns the conduct of a certain power-hungry church leader named Diotrephes.



Second John

Third John



Domitian banishes John to Patmos Island where he receives and records a Revelation regarding Christ’s triumph in the last days. John is instructed to measure the temple of God, but to “exclude the outer court”, “because it has been given to the Gentiles”. (Rev 11:1-2) Curiously, that’s the area currently occupied by the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount.

The Revelation of Christ



This story isn’t over by any means.

And every true believer has this in common: they’ve paid a price to follow Christ ... and they know that they know that they know that it’s well worth it!