

## The Jewish Context Of Early Church History

AD	ROMAN EMPEROR	CHURCH YEAR	*KEY EVENT
26	<b>TIBERIUS</b>	-7 {Sabbatical}	
27	(14 <sup>th</sup> )	-6	[Year 1 of Daniel's 70 <sup>th</sup> Sabbatical Cycle Begins In Fall]
28	(15 <sup>th</sup> )	-5	[Year 2 of Daniel's 70 <sup>th</sup> Sabbatical Cycle Begins In Fall] *John began immersing in the Spring.
29	(16 <sup>th</sup> )	-4	[Year 3 of Daniel's 70 <sup>th</sup> Sabbatical Cycle Begins In Fall] *Jesus was immersed in the Fall.
30	(17 <sup>th</sup> )	-3	[Year 4 of Daniel's 70 <sup>th</sup> Sabbatical Cycle Begins In Fall] *Jesus began preaching in the Spring.
31	(18 <sup>th</sup> )	-2	[Year 5 of Daniel's 70 <sup>th</sup> Sabbatical Cycle Begins In Fall]
32	(19 <sup>th</sup> )	-1	[Year 6 of Daniel's 70 <sup>th</sup> Sabbatical Cycle Begins In Fall]
33	(20 <sup>th</sup> )	1 {Sabbatical}	[Year 7 of Daniel's 70 <sup>th</sup> Sabbatical Cycle Begins In Fall] * <b>THE ATONEMENT</b>
34	(21 <sup>st</sup> )	2	*Saul of Tarsus took the lead in persecuting "The Way."
35	(22 <sup>nd</sup> )	3	*Saul of Tarsus was converted at Damascus, easing the persecution.
36	(23 <sup>rd</sup> )	4	*The book of <b>James</b> was written around this time. <sup>1</sup>
37	<b>GAIUS</b>	5	
38	(2 <sup>nd</sup> )	6	*Peter preaches to Gentiles for the 1 <sup>st</sup> Time around this time.
39	(3 <sup>rd</sup> )	7	
40	(4 <sup>th</sup> )	8 {Sabbatical}	*Gaius tried to have his image set up in the Jewish Temple. <sup>2</sup>
41	<b>CLAUDIUS</b>	9	
42	(2 <sup>nd</sup> )	10	*Barnabas sent to oversee the predominately Gentile Church at Antioch.
43	(3 <sup>rd</sup> )	11	*Saul of Tarsus works with Barnabas at Antioch.
44	(4 <sup>th</sup> )	12	* <b>"1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Journey"</b> sent out from Antioch.
45	(5 <sup>th</sup> )	13	
46	(6 <sup>th</sup> )	14	*Gospel of <b>Matthew</b> was written around this time. <sup>3</sup>
47	(7 <sup>th</sup> )	15 {Sabbatical}	*"Jerusalem Council" takes place around this time.
48	(8 <sup>th</sup> )	16	* <b>"2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey"</b> begins at Antioch. Book of <b>Galatians</b> was written. <sup>4</sup>
49	(9 <sup>th</sup> )	17	*Jews expelled from Rome by Claudius.
50	(10 <sup>th</sup> )	18	
51	(11 <sup>th</sup> )	19	
52	(12 <sup>th</sup> )	20	
53	(13 <sup>th</sup> )	21	
54	<b>NERO</b>	22 {Sabbatical}	* <b>"3<sup>rd</sup> Missionary Journey"</b> begins at Antioch.
55	(2 <sup>nd</sup> )	23 {Jubilee}	
56	(3 <sup>rd</sup> )	24	
57	(4 <sup>th</sup> )	25	*Book of <b>Romans</b> was written. <sup>5</sup>
58	(5 <sup>th</sup> )	26	*Paul arrested at Jerusalem during a Jewish riot.
59	(6 <sup>th</sup> )	27	
60	(7 <sup>th</sup> )	28	*Paul appeals for Imperial review.
61	(8 <sup>th</sup> )	29 {Sabbatical}	*Paul arrives in Rome
62	(9 <sup>th</sup> )	30	
63	(10 <sup>th</sup> )	31	*Paul apparently released. He probably traveled to Spain.
64	(11 <sup>th</sup> )	32	*Rome burns. Christians blamed & persecuted.
65	(12 <sup>th</sup> )	33	*Book of <b>Hebrews</b> was written around this time. <sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This book is very Jewish. It was probably written before Gentiles were welcomed into the Church.

<sup>2</sup> Josephus' Antiquities 18.8.

<sup>3</sup> This gospel is very Jewish in form. It was probably written shortly before the "Jerusalem Council" since Matthew is not listed among those apostles who were at Jerusalem at that time.

<sup>4</sup> This letter deals very seriously with the "Judaizing" problem which prompted the "Jerusalem Council."

<sup>5</sup> This book has a lot of Jewish oriented content, especially chapters 9-11, where Paul expresses his grief of unbelieving Jews.

<sup>6</sup> This book is very Jewish. It seems to be a well reasoned warning against Jewish believers abandoning Jesus (probably due to the Roman persecution) in favor of living a traditional Jewish life that focused upon Temple practices (indicating that the Jewish War had apparently not yet started).

AD	ROMAN EMPEROR	CHURCH YEAR	*KEY EVENT
66	NERO	34	*Jewish War with Rome began. <sup>7</sup>
67	(14 <sup>th</sup> )	35	*Peter crucified at Rome around this time.
68	(15 <sup>th</sup> )	36 {Sabbatical}	*Paul beheaded at Rome around this time.
69	VESPASIAN	37	*Jewish School of Law established at Yavneh under Yochanan ben Zakai. <sup>8</sup>
70	(2 <sup>nd</sup> )	38	*Jerusalem & the Jewish Temple destroyed. <sup>9</sup>
71	(3 <sup>rd</sup> )	39	*Vespasian ordered that Jews pay their annual “Temple Tax” to Rome. <sup>10</sup>
72	(4 <sup>th</sup> )	40	
73	(5 <sup>th</sup> )	41	
74	(6 <sup>th</sup> )	42	
75	(7 <sup>th</sup> )	43 {Sabbatical}	*John wrote his three letters sometime after coming to Ephesus. <sup>11</sup>
76	(8 <sup>th</sup> )	44	
77	(9 <sup>th</sup> )	45	
78	(10 <sup>th</sup> )	46	

<sup>7</sup> This was a significant event for religious Jews. Coins were minted, dated from this event, using the ancient Hebrew script.



Front: “Shekel-Israel-Year 3” (i.e., AD 68) Reverse: “Jerusalem, the holy”

<sup>8</sup> After the Temple was destroyed, since Jews could no longer perform the sacrifices, Yochanan taught “...the study of the Law is more acceptable in the sight of the Lord than burnt-offerings, because he who is studying the Torah knows the will of the Lord...” and “...when a sage lectures to the public it is accounted to him in Scripture as if sacrificing fat and blood upon the altar.” (Babylonian Talmud, Tract Aboth, Chapter 1, Mishna B)

<sup>9</sup> When the Jewish war with Rome began in the AD 66, Jewish believers in Jesus abandoned the city in accordance with Jesus’ instructions (Luke 21:20-24). Some of them remained nearby, in Judea, and presumably Symeon was the leader of this group. Another group relocated to Pella, to the northwest, just across the Jordan (Eusebius’ Church History 3.5.3), where they eventually became known as the “Nazarenes.”

<sup>10</sup> “[Vespasian] also laid a tribute upon the Jews wheresoever they were and enjoined every one of them to bring two drachmae every year into the Capitol, as they used to pay the same to the Temple at Jerusalem.” (Josephus’ Wars 2.218) “Thus was Jerusalem destroyed on the very day of Saturn, the day which even now the Jews reverence most. From that time forth it was ordered that the Jews who continued to observe their ancestral customs should pay an annual tribute of two denarii to Jupiter Capitolinus.” (Cassius Dio’s History 65.7)

<sup>11</sup> I suspect that the false teachers – the “antichrists” of 1 John 2:18-23; 4:1-6; 2 John 7, who denied the human nature of Jesus - against whom John was writing, arose, in part, out of the chaos brought on by the official persecution radiating out from Rome & the recent destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the saints from there. He seems also to have also been gravely concerned about anti-apostolic leaders, like Diotrephes (3 John 9-10), who were acting as tyrants within the congregations.

<b>AD</b>	<b>ROMAN EMPEROR</b>	<b>CHURCH YEAR</b>	<b>*KEY EVENT</b>
79	<b>TITUS</b>	47	
80	(2 <sup>nd</sup> )	48	*Gamaliel II replaces Yochanan ben Zakai as leader at Yavneh. <sup>12</sup>
81	<b>DOMITIAN</b> <sup>13</sup>	49	
82	(2 <sup>nd</sup> )	50 {Sabbatical}	
83	(3 <sup>rd</sup> )	51	
84	(4 <sup>th</sup> )	52	
85	(5 <sup>th</sup> )	53	
86	(6 <sup>th</sup> )	54	
87	(7 <sup>th</sup> )	55	
88	(8 <sup>th</sup> )	56	
89	(9 <sup>th</sup> )	57 {Sabbatical}	
90	(10 <sup>th</sup> )	58	
91	(11 <sup>th</sup> )	59	
92	(12 <sup>th</sup> )	60	
93	(13 <sup>th</sup> )	61	*The Jewish “Temple Tax” collected aggressively. <sup>14</sup>
94	(14 <sup>th</sup> )	62	*Clement of Rome wrote his letter to the Corinthians around this time. <sup>15</sup>
95	(15 <sup>th</sup> )	63	*Book of <b>Revelation</b> was written around this time. <sup>16</sup>
96	<b>NERVA</b>	64 {Sabbatical}	*The aggressive collection of the Jewish Temple tax ended. <sup>17</sup>
97	(2 <sup>nd</sup> )	65	
98	<b>TRAJAN</b> <sup>18</sup>	66	
99	(2 <sup>nd</sup> )	67	
100	(3 <sup>rd</sup> )	68	

<sup>12</sup> Gamaliel – son of Paul’s famous teacher (Acts 22:3; cf. 5:34) – supposedly modified the Amidah (the “Standing Prayer” which religious Jews performed mid-morning, noon and mid-afternoon) to include a curse against Christians. “Let there be no hope for slanderers, and let all wickedness perish in an instant. May all your enemies quickly be cut down, and may you soon in our day uproot, crush, cast down and humble the dominion of arrogance. Blessed are you, O Lord, who smashes enemies and humbles the arrogant.” (Item 12 in the Amidah)

<sup>13</sup> This emperor revived the “imperial cult” (worship of the emperor as a god) which eventually caused both Jews & Christians, who would have refused to participate, to suffer persecution. While this persecution doesn’t seem to have been as bad as that under Nero, there is reference to it by contemporary Christians. John the Apostle was evidently banished to Patmos during this period and wrote the book of Revelation after returning to Ephesus after the death of Domitian terminated his banishment decree.

<sup>14</sup> “Reduced to financial straits by the cost of his buildings and shows, as well as by the additions which he had made to the pay of the soldiers, he tried to lighten the military expenses by diminishing the number of his troops; but perceiving that in this way he exposed himself to the attacks of the barbarians, and nevertheless had difficulty in easing his burdens, he had no hesitation in resorting to every sort of robbery. The property of the living and the dead was seized everywhere on any charge brought by any accuser. It was enough to allege any action or word derogatory to the majesty of the *princeps*. Estates of those in no way connected with him were confiscated, if but one man came forward to declare that he had heard from the deceased during his lifetime that Caesar was his heir. Besides other taxes, that on the Jews was levied with the utmost rigor, and those were prosecuted who, without publicly acknowledging that faith, yet lived as Jews, as well as those who concealed their origin and did not pay the tribute levied upon their people. I recall being present in my youth when the person of a man ninety years old was examined before the procurator and a very crowded court, to see whether he was circumcised.” (Suetonius’ Twelve Caesars: Domitian, XII)

This may have led many Jewish believers to abandon their Jewish customs in order to avoid the tax.

<sup>15</sup> While clearly concerned about false teaching, Clement gives no indication of there being any such thing as a regional “Bishop.”

<sup>16</sup> Take note that unbelieving Jews are cited both at Smyrna (2:9) and Philadelphia (3:9).

<sup>17</sup> It was enough of a problem that Nerva commemorated its termination with a coin bearing his image.

<sup>18</sup> Trajan clearly continued the persecution of Christians, primarily in regard to the imperial cult.

<b>AD</b>	<b>ROMAN EMPEROR</b>	<b>CHURCH YEAR</b>	<b>*KEY EVENT</b>
101	<b>TRAJAN</b>	69	
102	(5 <sup>th</sup> )	70	
103	(6 <sup>th</sup> )	71 {Sabbatical}	
104	(7 <sup>th</sup> )	72 {Jubilee}	
105	(8 <sup>th</sup> )	73	
106	(9 <sup>th</sup> )	74	
107	(10 <sup>th</sup> )	75	
108	(11 <sup>th</sup> )	76	*Ignatius wrote his letters around this time, just before his execution. <sup>19</sup>
109	(12 <sup>th</sup> )	77	
110	(13 <sup>th</sup> )	78 {Sabbatical}	*Polycarp of Smyrna writes his letter to the Philippians. <sup>20</sup>
111	(14 <sup>th</sup> )	79	
112	(15 <sup>th</sup> )	80	*Pliny wrote to Trajan for guidance on dealing with Christians.
113	(16 <sup>th</sup> )	81	
114	(17 <sup>th</sup> )	82	
115	(18 <sup>th</sup> )	83	* <b>“Kitos War”</b> - Widespread Jewish unrest mars the end of Trajan’s reign. <sup>21</sup>
116	(19 <sup>th</sup> )	84	* <b>“Kitos War”</b>
117	<b>HADRIAN</b>	85 {Sabbatical}	* <b>“Kitos War”</b>
118	(2 <sup>nd</sup> )	86	
119	(3 <sup>rd</sup> )	87	
120	(4 <sup>th</sup> )	88	*The Didache indicates a distinction between Christians & Jews. <sup>22</sup>
121	(5 <sup>th</sup> )	89	
122	(6 <sup>th</sup> )	90	
123	(7 <sup>th</sup> )	91	
124	(8 <sup>th</sup> )	92 {Sabbatical}	
125	(9 <sup>th</sup> )	93	
126	(10 <sup>th</sup> )	94	
127	(11 <sup>th</sup> )	95	
128	(12 <sup>th</sup> )	96	
129	(13 <sup>th</sup> )	97	

<sup>19</sup> These letters indicated the formulation of a Bishop, Presbytery & Deaconate as a safeguard to false teaching.

<sup>20</sup> As with Ignatius, whom he held in very high esteem, Polycarp puts much emphasis upon a formal church hierarchy.

<sup>21</sup> This Jewish uprising is typically called the “Kitos War.” “Meanwhile the Jews in the region of Cyrene had put a certain Andreas at their head, and were destroying both the Romans and the Greeks. They would eat the flesh of their victims, make belts for themselves of their entrails, anoint themselves with their blood and wear their skins for clothing; many they sawed in two, from the head downwards; others they gave to wild beasts, and still others they forced to fight as gladiators. In all two hundred and twenty thousand persons perished. In Egypt, too, they perpetrated many similar outrages, and in Cyprus, under the leadership of a certain Artemion. There, also, two hundred and forty thousand perished, and for this reason no Jew may set foot on that island, but even if one of them is driven upon its shores by a storm he is put to death. Among others who subdued the Jews was Lusius, who was sent by Trajan.” (Cassius Dio’s History, 68.32)

<sup>22</sup> This text also shows how a formality controlled by a regional “Bishop” was taking form.

AD	ROMAN EMPEROR	CHURCH YEAR	*KEY EVENT
130	HADRIAN	98	*Hadrian orders Jerusalem rebuilt as <i>Aelia Capitolina</i> . <sup>23</sup>
131	(15 <sup>th</sup> )	99 {Sabbatical}	*The Letter of Mathetes to Dognetus was written around this time. <sup>24</sup>
132	(16 <sup>th</sup> )	100	* <b>Bar-Kokhba Revolt</b> – Led by Simon bar Kokhba. <sup>25</sup>
133	(17 <sup>th</sup> )	101	* <b>Bar-Kokhba Revolt</b>
134	(18 <sup>th</sup> )	102	* <b>Bar-Kokhba Revolt</b>
135	(19 <sup>th</sup> )	103	* <b>Bar-Kokhba Revolt</b> – Roman legions end the revolution. <sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Aelia* was in honor of Hadrian's family & *Capitolina* in honor of the Roman god Jupiter (whose temple was located on the *Capitoline* Hill back in Rome). A new temple to Jupiter was to be built upon the former site of the Jewish Temple. This fact, along with other anti-Semitic laws put in place by Hadrian prompted the Bar-Kokhba Revolt.

“At Jerusalem he founded a city in place of the one which had been razed to the ground, naming it *Aelia Capitolina*, and on the site of the temple of the god he raised a new temple to Jupiter. This brought on a war of no slight importance nor of brief duration, for the Jews deemed it intolerable that foreign races should be settled in their city and foreign religious rites planted there. So long, indeed, as Hadrian was close by in Egypt and again in Syria, they remained quiet, save in so far as they purposely made of poor quality such weapons as they were called upon to furnish, in order that the Romans might reject them and they themselves might thus have the use of them; but when he went farther away, they openly revolted. To be sure, they did not dare try conclusions with the Romans in the open field, but they occupied the advantageous positions in the country and strengthened them with mines and walls, in order that they might have places of refuge whenever they should be hard pressed, and might meet together unobserved under ground; and they pierced these subterranean passages from above at intervals to let in air and light.

At first the Romans took no account of them. Soon, however, all Judaea had been stirred up, and the Jews everywhere were showing signs of disturbance, were gathering together, and giving evidence of great hostility to the Romans, partly by secret and partly by overt acts; many outside nations, too, were joining them through eagerness for gain, and the whole earth, one might almost say, was being stirred up over the matter. Then, indeed, Hadrian sent against them his best generals. First of these was Julius Severus, who was dispatched from Britain, where he was governor, against the Jews. Severus did not venture to attack his opponents in the open at any one point, in view of their numbers and their desperation, but by intercepting small groups, thanks to the number of his soldiers and his under-officers, and by depriving them of food and shutting them up, he was able, rather slowly, to be sure, but with comparatively little danger, to crush, exhaust and exterminate them. Very few of them in fact survived. Fifty of their most important outposts and nine hundred and eighty-five of their most famous villages were razed to the ground. Five hundred and eighty thousand men were slain in the various raids and battles, and the number of those that perished by famine, disease and fire was past finding out. Thus nearly the whole of Judaea was made desolate, a result of which the people had had forewarning before the war. For the tomb of Solomon, which the Jews regard as an object of veneration, fell to pieces of itself and collapsed, and many wolves and hyenas rushed howling into their cities. Many Romans, moreover, perished in this war. Therefore Hadrian in writing to the senate did not employ the opening phrase commonly affected by the emperors, "If you and our children are in health, it is well; I and the legions are in health." (Dio Cassius History, 69.12-13)

<sup>24</sup> This document makes a clear distinction between Jews & Christians.

<sup>25</sup> This was another significant event for religious Jews who considered Simon their Messiah. Once again they minted coins, dated from this year, using the ancient script.



Front: A rebuilt Temple with the Ark inside & a Messianic star above the name of Simon.

Reverse: A Jewish *lulav* (closed, ornamental palm frond used during Tabernacles) and the words, “To the freedom of Jerusalem.”

<b>AD</b>	<b>ROMAN EMPEROR</b>	<b>CHURCH YEAR</b>	<b>*KEY EVENT</b>
136	(20 <sup>th</sup> )	104	
137	(21 <sup>st</sup> )	105	
138	Antonius Pius	106 {Sabbatical}	
139	(2 <sup>nd</sup> )	107	
140	(3 <sup>rd</sup> )	108	
141	(4 <sup>th</sup> )	109	
142	(5 <sup>th</sup> )	110	
143	(6 <sup>th</sup> )	111	
144	(7 <sup>th</sup> )	112	
145	(8 <sup>th</sup> )	113 {Sabbatical}	*Justin writes his Dialogue With Trypho around this time. <sup>27</sup>
146	Antonius Pius	114	
147	(10 <sup>th</sup> )	115	
148	(11 <sup>th</sup> )	116	
149	(12 <sup>th</sup> )	117	
150	(13 <sup>th</sup> )	118	
151	(14 <sup>th</sup> )	119	
152	(15 <sup>th</sup> )	120 {Sabbatical}	*Around this time Polycarp of Smyrna visited Rome. <sup>28</sup>
153	(16 <sup>th</sup> )	121	
154	(17 <sup>th</sup> )	122	
155	(18 <sup>th</sup> )	123	*Polycarp of Smyrna was executed. <sup>29</sup>
156	(19 <sup>th</sup> )	124	
157	(20 <sup>th</sup> )	125	
158	(21 <sup>st</sup> )	126	
159	(22 <sup>nd</sup> )	127 {Sabbatical}	
160	(23 <sup>rd</sup> )	128	
161	Marcus Aurelius	129	

<sup>26</sup> Over a half million Jews died in the Roman response and nearly a thousand Jewish cities were burned to the ground. Thereafter, all Jews (including Christian Jews) were banned from entering the rebuilt city of Jerusalem.

<sup>27</sup> Justin was a Greek, born near Nablus, Samaria, and then educated as a philosopher in Ephesus. Having been later converted to Christianity, he defended the new faith against Judaism via philosophical means.

<sup>28</sup> Among the things Polycarp discussed with his Roman counterpart was “Quartodecimanism” (“Fourteenthism”) controversy. The eastern (more ancient & more connected to their Jewish roots) churches annually commemorated the death of Christ on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan, regardless of the day of the week upon which it fell. The western (more typically Gentile oriented) churches formally observed it on the Friday previous to the Sunday following the spring full moon. The two bishops basically agreed to disagree, but the issue would later cause great trouble in the church.

“And when the blessed Polycarp was at Rome in the time of Anicetus, and they disagreed a little about certain other things, they immediately made peace with one another, not caring to quarrel over this matter. For neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp not to observe what he had always observed with John the disciple of our Lord, and the other apostles with whom he had associated; neither could Polycarp persuade Anicetus to observe it as he said that he ought to follow the customs of the presbyters that had preceded him.” (Eusebius’ History, 5.24.16)

<sup>29</sup> The oldest Christian record of Polycarp’s martyrdom emphasizes the role taken by local Jews in the execution.