

Date	Event
c. BC 1500-50	The books which now make up the "Old Testament" are composed.
c. BC 250-50	Jews in living in Alexandria (Egypt) translate the Jewish Scriptures into Greek, which was the <i>lingua franca</i> of the Mediterranean at the time. This translation of the Old Testament, known as the <i>Septuagint</i> , is widely used in Jewish communities throughout the Roman world until c. 100 AD. At this point, there is not yet a notion of a strict "canon," or official list, of books in the Jewish Bible.
c. AD 29	Jesus is crucified, rises from the tomb and ascends into heaven. Christians continue to meet for prayers and to celebrate the earliest form of the Mass - a format with a liturgy of Scripture (following the Jewish synagogue's lectionary custom with its set readings for specific days) followed by a celebration of the Eucharist. In these early days, the readings for these liturgies come from the only "scriptures" the Christians know - the Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the <i>Septuagint</i> . Almost all New Testament references to "scripture" refer not to the entire Bible that we now possess, but to the Jewish Scriptures, our Old Testament.
c. 35	Saul, a pharisee, witnesses the stoning of the deacon Stephen, the first recorded Christian martyrdom.
c. 36	Jesus appears to Saul near Damascus, converting him to the faith. Saul, now going by the Greek form of his name, Paul, would go on to compose the majority of the letters that make up the New Testament.
c. 50 - 100	The Gospels, letters and the Apocalypse (i.e. Revelation) that would eventually be canonized as the "New Testament" are written in these years. The first to be composed were likely Paul's two letters to the Thessalonians (c. 50), and the last were likely John's three letters (c. 90-100). Mark's was probably the first gospel to be written (c. 67) and John's was the last (c. 90). Evidence suggests that all of these books were originally composed in Greek, though there is belief among some biblical experts that the earliest version of Matthew may have been penned in Aramaic, the language of Jesus. The four gospels were written for different local church centers and can be identified stylistically with certain regions: Mark with Rome, Matthew with Antioch and greater Syria, Luke with the churches Paul founded in present-day Greece and John with Ephesus and the churches of Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). By this time, the local churches have begun reading these Gospels and letters alongside the Old Testament readings during the first part of the Mass.
c. 80 - 200	In response to the growing popularity and influence of the Church, Jewish leaders begin to cultivate ideas designed to preserve Judaism and Hebrew culture. During this period the Septuagint version of the Jewish scriptures which, up until this time had been widely used throughout the Mediterranean world, came to be rejected by Jewish leaders. Prayers cursing the <i>minim</i> (Hebrew for "pagans," probably referring to Christians) also begin to appear in synagogue liturgies during this time.
c. 90 - 95	Evidence from some of the writings of the Church Fathers (the generations of Church leaders that immediately followed the apostles) suggests that by this time, Paul's ten letters had been collected together into a single volume which circulated among many early churches. Also by this time, the four Gospels began to be circulated to other churches outside of their individual regions of origin.
c. 140 - 144	A layman named Marcion founds a popular heretical sect in Rome which disallows the reading of the Old Testament for the belief that the god of the Jews is evil and is a different being from the New Testament god. The Marcionites allow liturgical use of only one Gospel (Luke, edited of any Jewish references) and ten of Paul's letters. His actions force leaders of the Catholic Church to discuss, for the first time, the establishment of a canon of Scripture (i.e. an official list of books that may be read during the Mass).
c. 170	The so-called "Muratorian canon" is composed at Rome. It lists the books approved to be read in the local churches within Rome. Interestingly, while the Letters of James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John and Hebrews are not found on this list, a book known as the <i>Apocalypse of Peter</i> is.
173	A Christian convert named Tatian leaves the Church and joins a Gnostic sect in present-day Syria. He then composes a one-volume synthesis of the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke called the <i>Diatessaron</i> . This text becomes so popular, even among Catholics, that it is practically the only Gospel used in Syria during the third and fourth centuries.
c. 180	New Testament books are first translated into Latin and Syriac around this time as both languages grow in use in the Western and Eastern parts of the Roman Empire, respectively. By now, twenty-one books of our present New Testament enjoy status as indisputably legitimate throughout the Catholic Church. Added to these, some local churches also continued to read from other early Christian writings during their Masses. The <i>Didache</i> , or <i>Teaching of the Twelve</i> continues to be used in Syria, the <i>Epistle of Barnabas</i> is popular in Alexandria, the <i>Shepherd of Hermas</i> in Carthage, and the <i>Apocalypse of Peter</i> in Rome. In time, these documents were seen to be useful and edifying, but they failed to gain eventual acceptance as Scripture in the universal Church.
c. 200	Spurred by the rise of heresies such as Marcionism and gnosticism, local churches begin to make official declarations about the documents to be read during their liturgies. This newly unified body of Christian literature is only gradually recognized as authoritative within the Church. In spite of the practice of publicly reading from these "New Testament" books in the Church's liturgies, there is still, at this point, no clear evidence that they were considered to be equal in authority to the scriptures of the Old Covenant (i.e. the Old Testament). Even though the term "Scripture" was applied to Paul's letters (2 Peter 3:16) and, later, to the Gospels (by II Clement and the writings of Justin Martyr), it is not until the end of the second century that the expressions "inspired writings," "Scriptures of the Lord," and "the Scriptures" are used indiscriminately of both the Old Testament and the core of the New Testament. At this time the designation "the New Testament" made its appearance and ultimately displaced all earlier names for the collection of the new books. From this point on, it becomes not a question of the nature of the Church's canon, but only of its extent.

367	Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria (Egypt), in his Easter letter of 367, lists the books which he (and his church) recognized as Scripture. This is the earliest extant list of the books of the New Testament in exactly the same number and order as we have them today.
393	The Council of Hippo, a regional church council in North Africa, led by Augustine, lists a canon of New Testament writings which mirrors our own.
397	Third Council of Carthage, another regional church council in North Africa, publishes a listing of the "divine Scriptures" which, again, is the same as our present canon (Old and New Testaments). This canon was sent to Rome for the pope's approval. This same canon would later be re-confirmed by the Seventh Ecumenical Council (Nicaea II) in 787 and remains, to this day, the canon of Scripture recognized by the Catholic Church as well as the Eastern Orthodox churches.