THE QUESTION

Was Mark the first Gospel written?

Asked by a THF member on May 19, 2026 · published November 9, 2026, updated November 11, 2026 · 5 numbered quotations · the 13 early Christian passages and 191 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/was-mark-the-first-gospel-written

The short answer *From the text: says what the passages say*

Not according to these early writers. Origen says he learned by tradition that Matthew was written first and Mark second, and Irenaeus also places Matthew before Mark. Both tie Mark's Gospel closely to Peter's preaching. No passage here says Mark came first, though these are reports of tradition rather than dated proof.

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POINT 1 OF 4

Origen received Matthew first, Mark second

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Origen gives the clearest order in these passages. He says he learned it by tradition: Matthew first, then Mark, then Luke, and John last. He presents this as what was handed down to him, not as something he worked out from dates.

1

"About the four Gospels, which alone are undisputed in the Church of God under heaven, I learned by tradition that the Gospel according to Matthew was written first."

later in the same passage

"The second Gospel written was the one according to Mark."

later in the same passage

"Third was the Gospel according to Luke, the Gospel commended by Paul, which Luke composed for converts from the Gentiles. Last of all was the Gospel according to John."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *Commentary on Matthew* 1 (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 12, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 4

Irenaeus also puts Matthew's Gospel before Mark's

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Irenaeus describes Matthew writing while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome. He says Mark wrote down Peter's preaching after their departure, then names Luke, and later John. His account fits the same order that Origen reports.

2

"Matthew also wrote a Gospel in the Hebrew language while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome and laying the foundations of the Church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, wrote down what Peter had preached."

later in the same passage

"Luke, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him. Later on, John, the disciple of the Lord, who had leaned upon His chest, published a Gospel during his time in Ephesus in Asia."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book III* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 2, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

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POINT 3 OF 4

Mark wrote down what Peter preached

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement of Alexandria says Mark, Peter's follower, wrote while Peter was preaching in Rome, so the hearers could remember what was said. Origen says Mark wrote by Peter's instruction and links him to the greeting where Peter calls Mark his son in 1 Peter 5:13. Neither says this made Mark's Gospel the first.

3 “Mark, Peter's follower, wrote what is called the Gospel according to Mark while Peter was publicly preaching the Gospel at Rome before some of Caesar's equites and giving many testimonies about Christ. He did this so that they might be able to remember what had been spoken.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Fragments* 1 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 5, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

4 “Mark wrote it according to Peter's instruction. In his General Epistle, Peter acknowledged him as a son, saying, "The church that is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son."”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *Commentary on Matthew* 1 (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 12, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 4

Tertullian ranks apostles before their followers

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

Tertullian says apostolic men come with and after the apostles, because disciples need their teachers' authority behind them. So he names the apostles John and Matthew first, and Luke and Mark afterward. His point is mainly about authority; it may hint at time order, but it is less clear than Origen.

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5 “However, there are also apostolic men. Yet they are not alone, but appear with apostles and after apostles. This is because the preaching of disciples might be open to the suspicion of seeking glory for itself, if the authority of their masters did not accompany it.”

later in the same passage

“Of the apostles, therefore, John and Matthew first instill faith into us. Of apostolic men, Luke and Mark renew it afterward.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *Against Marcion* 2 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 10, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages report what early Christians received by tradition; they give no dates and do not prove the exact order of writing.
- They do not say whether any Gospel writer used another Gospel when writing.
- Tertullian's order is mainly about apostles and their followers, so it should not be read as a strict timeline.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 13 early Christian passages and 191 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–13, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 14–120, in Bible order), then 84 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF’s updated English unless marked “1885 English” (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). “… [continues online]” marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *13 passages from 7 writers*

Papias, *c. 95–130 AD · source 1*

1 *Fragments* (on point 3) “the Gospel, which Papias stated in these words: The presbyter said this: Mark, having become Peter's interpreter, accurately wrote down everything he remembered. However, he did not recount the… [continues online] **read ›**

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Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 2–4*

2 *Against Heresies: Book III* **Quote 2, page 2** “Gospel of God equally and individually. Matthew also wrote a Gospel in the Hebrew language while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome and laying the foundations of the Church… [continues online] **read ›**

3 *Against Heresies: Book III* “reason, this Gospel is full of confidence, for such is His nature. But the Gospel according to Luke, focusing on His priestly role, begins with Zacharias the priest offering sacrifice… [continues online] **read ›**

4 *Against Heresies: Book III* (on point 2) “Therefore, Mark, the interpreter and follower of Peter, begins his Gospel narrative in this way: "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; as it is… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 5–7*

5 *Fragments* 1 **Quote 3, page 3** “my son, sends you greetings. Mark, Peter's follower, wrote what is called the Gospel according to Mark while Peter was publicly preaching the Gospel at Rome before some of… [continues online] **read ›**

6 *Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?* 5 (on point 3) “These things are written in the Gospel according to Mark… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Fragments* 1 (on point 3) “are now," he says, "1 Peter 12 reported… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 8–10*

8 *Against Marcion* 5 (on point 4) “then, Marcion ought to be called to a strict account concerning these other Gospels also, for having omitted them, and insisted in preference on Luke… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Against Marcion* 8 (1885 English; on point 4) “priority therein as our rule, and alleging lateness to be the characteristic of every heresy… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *Against Marcion* 2 **Quote 5, page 4** now have our answer to the Antitheses, briefly set out by us. I now pass on to give proof of the Gospel — not, to be sure, of Jewry, but of… [continues online] **read ›**

Caius, *c. 200–220 AD · source 11*

11 *Fragments* 1 (1885 English) “third book of the Gospel, that according to Luke, the well-known physician Luke wrote in his own name in order after the ascension of Christ, and when Paul had… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · source 12*

12 *Commentary on Matthew* 1 (1885 English) **Quotes 1, 4, pages 2, 3** “so does Mark my son. 1 Peter 5:13 And third, was that according to Luke, the Gospel commended by Paul, which he composed for the converts from the Gentiles… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · source 13*

13 *Apostolic Constitutions* “our sacred books, that is, those of the New Covenant, are these: the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *107 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

14 **Genesis 38:28** As she was giving birth, one of them put out his hand, and the midwife took it and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, “This one shall come out first.” **read ›**

15 **Genesis 43:25** They prepared the gifts until Joseph came at noon, for they had heard that he was going to dine there. **read ›**

16 **Exodus 16:34** Just as the Lord commanded Moses, Aaron laid it up before the testimony, to be kept. **read ›**

17 **Leviticus 23:5** In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, between the evenings, is the Lord’s Passover. **read ›**

18 **Numbers 10:13** They set out first by the voice of the Lord, by the hand of Moses. **read ›**

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19 **Deuteronomy 6:5** And you shall love the Lord your God with all your mind, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. **read ›**

20 **Deuteronomy 16:16** Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place that the Lord chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles. You shall not appear before the Lord your God empty-handed, **read ›**

21 **Deuteronomy 19:15** One witness shall not stand to testify against a man for any unrighteousness, or for any offense, or for any sin that he commits. At the mouth of two witnesses or at the mouth of three witnesses every word shall stand. **read ›**

22 **Deuteronomy 31:24** When Moses had finished writing all the words of this law in a book, to the very end, **read ›**

23 **Joshua 3:2** After three days the scribes went through the camp **read ›**

24 **1 Chronicles 12:11** Jethi the sixth, Eliab the seventh, (Septuagint 1 Chronicles 12:12 (1 Chronicles 12:11 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

25 **1 Chronicles 25:21** the fourteenth, Mattithiah; his sons and his brothers, twelve; **read ›**

26 **2 Chronicles 8:13** as the duty of each day required, offering according to the commandments of Moses on the Sabbaths, at the new moons, and at the feasts, three times in the year: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles. **read ›**

27 **2 Chronicles 26:22** The rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, are written by Jessias the prophet. **read ›**

28 **Ezra 3:10** And they laid the foundation for building the house of the Lord; and the priests stood in their robes with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Lord by the direction of David king of Israel. **read ›**

29 **Proverbs 1:1** The Proverbs of Solomon son of David, who reigned in Israel, **read ›**

30 **Proverbs 2:3** for if you call upon wisdom, and give your voice to understanding, **read ›**

31 **Proverbs 2:4** and if you seek her like silver, and search her out like treasures, **read ›**

32 **Proverbs 5:14** I very nearly came into every kind of evil in the midst of the assembly and the congregation." **read ›**

33 **Proverbs 5:21** For the ways of a man are before the eyes of God, and he watches all his tracks. **read ›**

34 **Proverbs 5:23** Such a man dies with the untaught; he is cast out from the abundance of his own livelihood, and he has perished through foolishness. **read ›**

35 **Proverbs 14:19** The evil will fall before the good, and the ungodly will wait at the doors of the righteous. **read ›**

36 **Proverbs 15:24** The thoughts of the man of understanding are ways of life, that he may turn aside from Hades and be saved. **read ›**

37 **Proverbs 16:14** The wrath of a king is a messenger of death, but a wise man will appease him. **read ›**

38 **Ecclesiastes 1:7** All the brooks go into the sea, yet the sea is not filled; to the place where the brooks go, there they return, to go again. **read ›**

39 **Ecclesiastes 3:14** I knew that all that God has made will be forever; nothing can be added to it, and nothing can be taken from it; and God has done it so that they may fear before him. **read ›**

40 **Ecclesiastes 9:17** The words of the wise are heard in quietness more than the cry of those in power in foolishness. **read ›**

41 **Ecclesiastes 10:12** The words of a wise man's mouth are grace, but the lips of a fool will swallow him up. **read ›**

42 **1 Esdras 3:10** The first wrote, "Wine is strongest." **read ›**

43 **1 Esdras 3:17** And they said to them, "Tell us about what is written." Then the first, who had spoken of the strength of wine, began, **read ›**

44 **1 Esdras 9:45** Then Ezra took up the book before the multitude and sat in the place of honor before them all. **read ›**

45 **Tobit 8:14** and she came out and told them that he was alive. **read ›**

46 **Tobit 12:20** And now give thanks to God, because I am going up to him who sent me; and write all that has been accomplished in a book." **read ›**

47 **Wisdom of Sirach 18:26** From morning until evening the time changes, and all things are swift before the Lord. **read ›**

48 **Wisdom of Sirach 32:5** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

49 **Wisdom of Sirach 36:20** A crooked heart will give sorrow, but a man of much experience will repay him. (Septuagint Wisdom of Sirach 36:25 (Wisdom of Sirach 36:20 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

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50 **Wisdom of Sirach 39:32** Therefore from the beginning I was resolved, and I thought it through, and I have left it in writing. **read ›**

51 **1 Maccabees 1:1** After Alexander son of Philip, the Macedonian, who came out of the land of Kittim, had struck down Darius king of the Persians and Medes, he reigned in his place, first over Greece. **read ›**

52 **1 Maccabees 2:3** Simon, called Thassi; **read ›**

53 **1 Maccabees 2:4** Judas, called Maccabeus; **read ›**

54 **1 Maccabees 5:14** While the letters were still being read, behold, other messengers came from Galilee with their garments torn, reporting in these words, **read ›**

55 **1 Maccabees 5:21** So Simon went into Galilee and fought many battles with the nations, and the nations were crushed before him. **read ›**

56 **1 Maccabees 5:23** Then he took those in Galilee and in Arbatta, with their wives and children and all that they had, and brought them into Judea with great gladness. **read ›**

57 **1 Maccabees 5:55** Now in the days when Judas and Jonathan were in Gilead, and Simon his brother was in Galilee opposite Ptolemais, **read ›**

58 **1 Maccabees 11:64** He went to meet them, but left his brother Simon in the country. **read ›**

59 **1 Maccabees 13:42** And the people of Israel began to write in their documents and contracts, “In the first year of Simon, the great high priest and general and leader of the Jews.” **read ›**

60 **1 Maccabees 14:19** And these were read before the assembly in Jerusalem. **read ›**

61 **1 Maccabees 15:24** And they wrote a copy of these to Simon the high priest. **read ›**

62 **1 Maccabees 16:14** Simon was visiting the cities in the country and attending to their needs; and he went down to Jericho with Mattathias and Judas his sons, in the hundred and seventy-seventh year, in the eleventh month, which is the month Shebat. **read ›**

63 **2 Maccabees 1:7** In the reign of Demetrius, in the one hundred and sixty-ninth year, we Jews wrote to you in the trouble and in the extremity that came upon us in those years, after Jason and those with him revolted from the holy land and from the kingdom, **read ›**

64 **2 Maccabees 3:14** So he set a day and went in to direct the inspection of these funds; and there was no small distress throughout the whole city. **read ›**

65 **2 Maccabees 3:36** And he bore witness to everyone about the works of the greatest God, which he had seen with his own eyes. **read ›**

66 **2 Maccabees 9:17** and besides all this, he would become a Jew and would go through every inhabited place proclaiming the power of God. **read ›**

67 **2 Maccabees 10:12** For Ptolemy, who was called Macron, had taken the lead in showing justice to the Jews because of the wrong that had been done to them, and had tried to deal with them peacefully. **read ›**

68 **2 Maccabees 11:37** Therefore make haste and send some men, so that we too may know what your opinion is. **read ›**

69 **2 Maccabees 12:32** After the feast called Pentecost, they hurried against Gorgias, the governor of Idumea. **read ›**

70 **2 Maccabees 14:17** Simon the brother of Judas had engaged Nicanor, but had been checked for a short time because of the sudden dismay of the enemy. **read ›**

71 **2 Maccabees 14:31** When Nicanor realized that he had been thoroughly outmaneuvered by the man, he came to the very great and holy temple while the priests were offering the appointed sacrifices, and he ordered them to hand the man over. **read ›**

72 **3 Maccabees 6:29** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

73 **4 Maccabees 6:33** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

74 **4 Maccabees 12:17** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

75 **1 Enoch 38:1** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

76 **1 Enoch 41:6** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

77 **1 Enoch 62:7** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

78 **1 Enoch 89:77** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

79 **1 Enoch 90:42** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

80 **1 Enoch 93:3** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

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81 **1 Enoch 104:11** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
82 **Matthew 4:12** Now when Jesus heard that John had been handed over, he withdrew into Galilee. **read ›**
83 **Matthew 4:23** Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness among the people. **read ›**
84 **Matthew 26:1** When Jesus had finished all these words, he said to his disciples, **read ›**
85 **Mark 1:1** The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. **read ›**
86 **Mark 1:2** As it is written in the prophets: Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you. **read ›**
87 **Mark 1:9** In those days, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. **read ›**
88 **Mark 1:14** Now after John was taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, **read ›**
89 **Mark 1:16** Passing along by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. **read ›**
90 **Mark 1:28** The report of him went out immediately throughout the surrounding region of Galilee. **read ›**
91 **Mark 1:29** Immediately, when they had come out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. **read ›**
92 **Mark 1:36** Simon and those who were with him searched for him. **read ›**
93 **Mark 1:38** He said to them, “Let us go to the neighboring towns, so that I may preach there also, for this is why I came out.” **read ›**
94 **Mark 1:39** He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee and casting out demons. **read ›**
95 **Mark 3:12** He sternly warned them that they should not make him known. **read ›**
96 **Mark 3:16** Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); **read ›**
97 **Mark 5:37** He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. **read ›**
98 **Mark 9:12** He said to them, “Elijah indeed comes first, and restores all things. How is it written about the Son of Man, that he should suffer many things and be despised? **read ›**
99 **Mark 10:31** But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” **read ›**
100 **Mark 13:3** As he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, **read ›**
101 **Mark 13:10** The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. **read ›**
102 **Mark 14:16** His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found things as he had said to them, and they prepared the Passover. **read ›**
103 **Mark 14:17** When it was evening he came with the twelve. **read ›**
104 **Mark 14:28** However, after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee.” **read ›**
105 **Mark 14:33** He took with him Peter, James, and John, and began to be greatly troubled and distressed. **read ›**
106 **Mark 14:56** For many gave false testimony against him, but their testimonies did not agree. **read ›**
107 **Mark 14:59** Even so, their testimony did not agree. **read ›**
108 **Mark 16:2** Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. **read ›**
109 **Mark 16:7** But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He goes before you into Galilee. There you will see him, as he said to you.’” **read ›**
110 **Mark 16:9** Now when he had risen early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. **read ›**
111 **Luke 1:1** Since many have undertaken to set in order a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, **read ›**
112 **Luke 1:2** even as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word delivered them to us, **read ›**
113 **Luke 1:3** it seemed good to me also, having followed all things carefully from the beginning, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, **read ›**
114 **John 20:3** Therefore Peter and the other disciple went out, and they went toward the tomb. **read ›**

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115 **Acts 8:1** Saul consented to his killing. That day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. **read ›**

116 **Acts 8:23** For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of unrighteousness." **read ›**

117 **Acts 12:25** Barnabas and Saul returned to Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their service, also taking with them John who was called Mark. **read ›**

118 **Acts 15:37** Barnabas planned to take John, who was called Mark, with them also. **read ›**

119 **Romans 7:2** For the woman that has a husband is bound by law to the husband while he lives, but if the husband dies, she is discharged from the law of the husband. **read ›**

120 **1 Peter 5:13** She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, greets you. So does Mark, my son. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *84 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Genesis 1:5

Psalms 24:7

Proverbs 1:11

Ecclesiastes 5:2

Song of Solomon 3:6

Isaiah 65:5

Jeremiah 23:20 · 23:30

Daniel 1:1 · 3:26 · 7:1 · 10:16 · 10:18 · 12:3

Matthew 1:18 · 3:13 · 3:15 · 3:16 · 5:10 · 5:13 · 5:18 · 5:42 · 6:1 · 10:23 · 10:29 · 13:8 · 16:23 · 17:1 · 22:10

Mark 2:17 · 9:2 · 14:62

Luke 1:35 · 17:19 · 19:12

John 1:1 · 1:3 · 1:14 · 2:1 · 2:4 · 3:6 · 4:16 · 4:24 · 14:2 · 18:28 · 19:13 · 19:31 · 20:30 · 21:22

Acts 10:37

1 Corinthians 1:19 · 1:27 · 2:9 · 5:7 · 11:3 · 15:20

2 Corinthians 5:17 · 8:9

Galatians 2:2

Ephesians 1:10 · 1:23

Philippians 3:10 · 4:3

Colossians 1:5 · 1:6 · 1:15 · 1:18 · 1:19 · 1:20 · 1:21 · 1:22 · 1:24 · 2:8 · 2:13 · 2:16 · 2:18 · 2:22

2 Thessalonians 2:1

Hebrews 9:27

1 John 1:1 · 5:7

Revelation 1:9 · 11:3 · 22:7

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Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “Was Mark the first Gospel written?” on May 19, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

Library only. This study was written only from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed above, with a link to read it.

How it was made. Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY