

1. I want to review some of that learned and then begin new material at point 2:9 on page four.

ACTS TIMELINE

All dates are approximate

- Ascension & Pentecost A.D. 30 (Tiberius)
- Stephen Killed A. D. 34-35 (Tiberius)
- Great Persecution A.D. 35-36 (Tiberius)
- Saul Conversion A. D. 38-40 (Caligula)
- Cornelius Conversion A. D. 39-40 (Caligula)
- Herod Agrippa I dies A. D. 44 (Claudius)
- Paul's 1st Journey A. D. 47-48 (Claudius)
- Jerusalem Council A. D. 48-50 (Claudius)
- Paul's 2nd Journey Begins A. D. 51 (Claudius)
- Paul's 3rd Journey A. D. 52-53 (Claudius)
- Paul to Ephesus A. D. 53 (Claudius)
- Paul to Greece A. D. 56 (Nero)
- Paul Arrested in Jerusalem A. D. 58 (Nero)
- Paul Imprisoned A. D. 58-60 (Nero)
- Voyage to Rome A. D. 60-61
- Paul in Rome A. D. 61-63 (Nero)
- Paul Released A. D. 63 (Nero)
- Paul Travels A. D. 63-65 (Nero)
- Paul Martyred A. D. 67-68 (Nero)
- Jerusalem Destroyed A. D. 70 (Vespasian)

A.D. 30 A.D. 40 A.D. 50 A.D. 60 A.D. 70

1.1 Paul was a circumcised Israelite of the tribe of Benjamin, speaking the Aramaic language in his home, inheritor of the tradition of Pharisees and a "strict observer" of the requirements of the Torah.

1.2 He advanced in Judaism beyond many of his contemporaries; he was first and foremost a Jew. Phi 3:5-6; Gal 1:14

1.3 So deeply ingrained were these qualities, that even near the end of his life he spoke with an honest appreciation of that heritage.

1.4 More than 20 years after his Christian conversion he cried, "I am a Pharisee, a son of a Pharisee; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead." Acts 23:6

1.5 Even some time after this he claimed that he served "the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Mosaic law, and that is written in the Prophets." Acts 24:14-15

1.6 Paul was a Jew of the dispersion, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, a place that he called "no ordinary city." Acts 21:39

1.7 As a child he lived in the midst of Greek culture, a place of education and commerce. It was "the city whose institutions best and most completely united the oriental and western character."

1.8 Paul developed a spirit of kinship with these "outsiders." He learned to understand them and to "become all things to all men." 1Co 9:22

1.9 Paul grew to late adolescence in this environment before going to Jerusalem to be educated under Gamaliel. Acts 22:3

1.10 After his conversion Paul spent a period of eight to ten years in Syria and Cilicia, a time during his adult years when he would become deeply aware of the world culture about him.



1.11 These were years of preparation for that ministry in which he was known as "the apostle to the Gentiles." Gal 1:22; Acts 9:27-30

1.12 In addition to these aspects of his life, one other is emphasized and is implicit in his letters. He was a Roman citizen. This was a prized possession. Acts 16:38; 22:25

1.13 Paul recognized the value of his citizenship. Acts 22:28

1.14 Tarsus was made a city of Rome just before Paul's birth and therefore his dad and his dad's posterity would become Roman citizens as would all freemen of the city.

1.15 Keep in mind it has been conservatively estimated that one-third of all of Rome's population at the time of Paul's birth were slaves.

1.16 In his letters, Paul not only strongly advocated the maintenance of law and order (the very foundation of Roman government), but also referred frequently to citizenship.

2. Conversion

2.1 In his letter to the churches of Galatia, Paul referred to his "former manner of life in Judaism," and how he had persecuted the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it." Gal 1:13

2.2 At that time he had believed that in pursuing such a course he was serving God and maintaining the purity of the Mosaic law. Paul's writings in the first chapter of the book of Galatians gave no indication of a break in his endeavor to please God at the time of his conversion. Gal 1:15-16

2.3 While the narratives in the book of Acts, as well as his letters to the churches, seem to indicate the "suddenness" of the conversion although clearly there were certain experiences that prepared him for that conversion.

2.4 The death of Stephen, at which Saul was in hearty agreement and the heat of his house-to-house campaign against those of the faith, could hardly leave him unaffected. Acts 7:58-60; 8:1-3

2.5 In any case, there are two elements in the story which are clear; first, Paul was convinced he had seen the risen Lord; and, second, his life was radically changed from that day forward.

2.5.1 The basis of his claim to apostleship lay in that experience.

2.6 Once and again he insists upon it (see 1Co 9:1; 15:8-15; Gal 1:15-17; compared with Acts 9:3-8; 22:6-11; 26:12-18).

2.7 Since he was not one of the Twelve, since he had no claim on Jesus, and since he had persecuted His followers, the necessity of the personal revelation of Christ to Paul seems apparent.

2.8 His change was first indicated by Paul's response to the heavenly voice: "What shall I do, Lord?" Acts 22:10

2.9 In Gal 2:20 Paul shows that he had a new relationship with Christ.

2.9.1 Also notice His new attitude expressed with reference to Christ.

2Co 5:16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.

2.9.2 The change was also evidenced by the message preached in the synagogues of Damascus (the very place he intended to visit in order to arrest the disciples of Jesus).

Acts 9:1 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest

Acts 9:2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

- Compare Acts 9:1-2 with Acts 9:20 ... 22

Acts 9:20 At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God ...

Acts 9:22 Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

2.10 Only a short time before he had thought that he "had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" even attempting to force His followers to blaspheme.

Acts 26:9 "I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Acts 26:10 And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests, I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.

Acts 26:11 Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.

2.11 There was a change in his sense of mission. He was convinced that God had called him to "preach Jesus [God's Son] among the Gentiles."

2.11.1 Paul was convinced this was the means by which Israel would ultimately be restored and blessed of God.

Rom 11:25 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.

Rom 11:26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

Rom 11:27 And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

2.12 Just as surely as Christ had appeared to others after His resurrection, He appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus.

1Co 15:5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.

1Co 15:6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

1Co 15:7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,

1Co 15:8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

1Co 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

3. Post-Conversion Activities

3.1 Following the conversion experience, Paul's life can be divided into several general periods:

- the relatively silent years, probably extending over ten to 12 years;

- the work at Antioch;
- the missionary journeys;
- the imprisonments.

3.1.1 The silent years: information about this period is scant.

3.1.2 What little is known comes from Acts 9:19-30 (together with the parallels in Acts chapter 22 and chapter 26) and several other Scriptures provided below:

Gal 1:15 But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased

Gal 1:16 to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man,

Gal 1:17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.

Gal 1:18 Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days.

Gal 1:19 I saw none of the other apostles--only James, the Lord's brother.

Gal 1:20 I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie.

Gal 1:21 Later I went to Syria and Cilicia.

Gal 1:22 I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.

Gal 1:23 They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy."

Gal 1:24 And they praised God because of me.

2Co 11:32 In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me.

2Co 11:33 But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.

3.1.3 An outline of the period would include at least the following points:

- Preaching in Damascus,

Acts 9:20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

Acts 9:21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

Acts 9:22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

- Journey into Arabia,

Gal 1:17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

- Return to Damascus and the flight to Jerusalem,

Gal 1:18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

2Co 11:32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:

2Co 11:33 And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

Acts 9:25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

Acts 9:26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

- The first meeting with Peter and James in Jerusalem,

Gal 1:18 Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days.

Gal 1:19 I saw none of the other apostles--only James, the Lord's brother.

- Return to Syria and Cilicia (Tarsus).

Gal 1:21 Later I went to Syria and Cilicia.

Gal 1:22 I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.

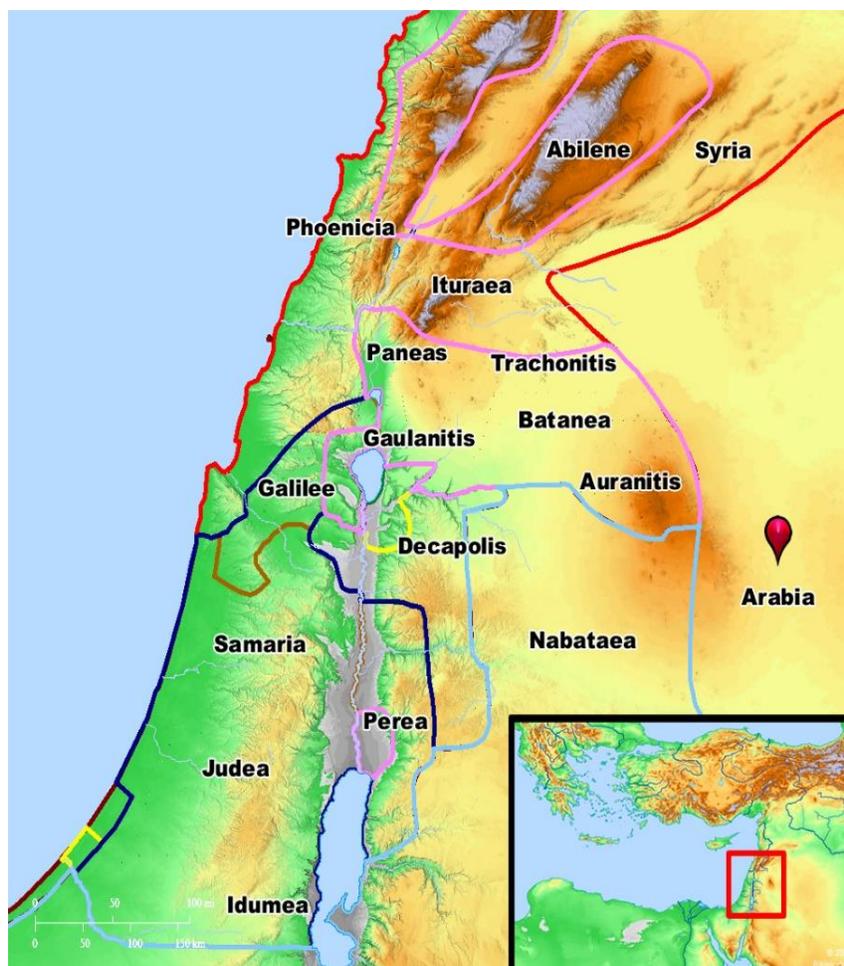
Gal 1:23 They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy."

Gal 1:24 And they praised God because of me.

Acts 9:30 Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

3.1.4 There were several questions left unanswered such as:

3.1.5 Where specifically in "Arabia" did the Holy Spirit lead him? And, what did he do there?



3.1.6 What was the purpose and nature of his first visit with Peter and James?

3.1.7 And, further, why was he continually on the run?

3.2 One is impressed with the energy of the man. He was indeed zealous (literally, "bubbling" or "boiling") in whatever he undertook.

3.3 For this reason alone one might suppose that the silent years were not years of inactivity or repose.

3.4 What we do know of Paul would certainly indicate there were no years of inactivity.

3.4.1 He began "immediately" to preach Jesus as the Son of God.

Acts 9:19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

Acts 9:20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

3.4.2 He went "immediately" into Arabia. (Gal 1:16-17)

Gal 1:15 But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased

Gal 1:16 to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man,

Gal 1:17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.

3.4.3 His preaching in Jerusalem aroused the fury of some (Acts 9:28-29); and reports filtered back to Judea in Syria and Cilicia he "is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." (Gal 1:21-23; Acts 11:19-21)

Acts 9:28 So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord.

Acts 9:29 He talked and debated with the Grecian Jews, but they tried to kill him.

Acts 9:30 When the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

Acts 9:31 Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.

Gal 1:21 Later I went to Syria and Cilicia.

Gal 1:22 I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.

Gal 1:23 They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy."

Gal 1:24 The work at Antioch: While Paul was in Tarsus (and other places in Syria and Cilicia); the gospel had been spread from Jerusalem to Syrian Antioch.

Acts 11:19 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews.

Acts 11:20 Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus.

Acts 11:21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

3.5 Barnabas had been sent to see what had happened there, and was instrumental in enlarging the number of converts.

3.5.1 But when the work grew too large for him, "he left for Tarsus to look for Saul."

Acts 11:25 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul,

3.5.2 Together the two worked in Antioch "for an entire year."

3.5.3 This was a crucial point in the life of Paul, for it may well have been here that his vision of taking the gospel to the Gentile world crystallized.

3.5.4 At any rate, it was while he was active in Antioch that "the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'"

Acts 13:2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

4. The Missionary Journeys

4.1 It was while he was active in Antioch that "the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'"

4.2 Thus were launched the missionary travels of the apostle Paul. The missionary journeys covered a period of about ten years.

4.3 Paul's work was chiefly in four provinces of the Roman Empire: Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia.

4.4 In each of these provinces he concentrated on the key cities, the centers of population.

4.4.1 Once his work was begun, he reached out into the surrounding countryside, usually by employing the native converts, training these men and ordained them as pastor-teachers.

Col 1:7 You learned it from Epaphras (pastor of the church at Colossae), our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf,
Col 1:8 and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

Col 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.

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