

SESSION I

PAUL, HIS LIFE

INTRODUCTION

Why / what should we love Paul for?

- 1) The earliest NT author
- 2) Apostle to the Gentiles (Phil 3; Gal 1-2; Acts 22:28)
- 3) The greatest Christian theologian

Additional reasons to study Paul

- 1) The Apostle who met the Risen, not the historical Jesus - Acts 9.
- 2) A controversial author. The document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission devotes a lot of space to him: Part 1 - the origins of the Gospel and letters of Paul, Part II - the message of the letters of Paul, Part III – the problematic issues in Paul's Letters
- 3) The closest associate or personal rival of St. Peter? (Gal 2)
- 4) The Patron of the Reformation – Martin Luther and the commentary on the Galatians
- 5) The one who invented Christianity. Scorsese - The Last Temptation of Jesus - Paul's Meeting with Jesus;
- 6) Alain Badiou, St. Paul – the inventor of the universal culture, Gal 3:28

Bibliography

The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Inspiration and Truth of Sacred Scripture: The Word that Comes from God and Speaks of God for the Salvation of the World* (Liturgical Press 2014)

The document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission devotes a lot of space to Paul: Part 1 - the origins of the Gospel and letters of Paul, Part II - the message of the letters of Paul, Part III – the problematic issues in Paul's Letters

Capes, David B., Rodney Reeves, and E. Randolph Richards. *Rediscovering Paul: An Introduction to His World, Letters, and Theology*. Second Edition. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2017.

Written in a good, contemporary language, the study allows the reader to immerse themselves in various dimensions of Paul's life: the Greco-Roman and the Jewish culture, letters, travels, spirituality and the meaning of Paul's thought for contemporary people.

Gorman, Michael J. *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul & His Letters*. Second Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017.

A good introduction into the cultural and religious context of Paul. A concise presentation of Paul's life, theology, spirituality and letters. In chronology, the author leaves many things open.

Murphy-O'Connor, Jerome, *Paul a Critical Life* (Oxford - New York: Oxford University Press 1997).

One of the best studies on Paul's letters, rich in historical, socio-cultural and textual references. The author relies on material from the letters of St. Paul, treating the Acts critically and complementarily. It opts for the location of the Council of Jerusalem after the Second Missionary Journey of Paul.

Porter, Stanley E. *The Apostle Paul: His Life, Thought, and Letters*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016.

A great, comprehensive work on the letters and life of Paul. The author follows the chronology of the Acts, supplementing it with letters of Paul. The Council of Jerusalem takes place after the First Missionary Journey of Paul. Porter recognizes the Pauline authorship of all 13 letters - an excellent paragraph on pseudoepigraphy. A contemporary, solid study, rich in good English bibliographic references.

Richards, E. Randolph. *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition and Collection*. Downers Grove, IL; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press; Apollos, 2004.

One of the best publications on letter writing in antiquity.

Hawthorne, Gerald F., Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.

Pitre, Brant, Michael P. Barber, and John A. Kincaid. *Paul, a New Covenant Jew: Rethinking Pauline Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019.

Byrne, Brendan. *Paul and the Economy of Salvation: Reading from the Perspective of the Last Judgment*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2021.

I. THE CHRONOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

1. DATE OF BIRTH

A. IN LETTER TO *PHILEMON* 9 Paul calls himself a *presbyter* (elderly)

Philemon 9 ⁹ yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love-- and **I, Paul, do this as an old man**, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus.

B. THE GREEK TRADITION

Pseudo-Hippocrates:

“In the nature of man there are seven seasons, which men call ages:

He is an elderly man (*presbyter*) till **he is fifty –six**, eight times seven years old”.

C. THE JEWISH TRADITION

At 5 years old one is fit for the Scripture

At 10 for the Mishnah

At 13 for the fulfilling of the commandments

At 15 for the Talmud

At 18 for the bride-chamber

At 20 for pursuing a calling

At 30 for authority

At 40 for discernment

At 50 for counsel

At 60 to be an elder

At 70 for grey hairs

At 80 for special strength

At 90 for bowed back

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D. FOR PAUL’S CONTEMPORARIES any male in his late fifties or early sixties have been considered elderly. According to Murphy-O’Connor, the letter to Philemon was written in AD 53 so Paul would then have been about 60, which would put his birth in the last years of the pre-Christian era. He would have been born about the same time as Christ, 6 BC.

Others, situating *Philemon* in Rome (61-62), and calling upon the Acts 7:58, where Paul is presented as a young man assisting at the death of Stephen (ca. 33) claim that he was born in 5/6 AD.

^{NRS} **Acts 7:58** Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of **a young man named Saul**. (Acts 7:58 NRS)

2. PAUL’S LIFE – AN OUTLINE – SEE THE PRESENTATION

Year	Letters + Acts of the Apostles	K. P. Donfried	J. Murphy-O’Connor
c. 6 BC	Birth		Birth
AD 33	Conversion	Conversion, Arabia, Jerusalem	Conversion
34	Arabia		Arabia
34-37	Damascus		Damascus
36		Jerusalem (1 st visit)	
37	Jerusalem (1 st visit)		Jerusalem (1 st visit)
37-?	Syria and Cilicia		Syria and Cilicia
43		<i>1 Thessalonians</i>	
45-46			Antioch (Winter) Journey to Galatia
46-48	Paul’s First Missionary Journey, Ministry in Galatia		Ministry in Galatia
48-50			Ministry in Macedonia
c. 49	Jerusalem 2 nd visit, Apostolic Assembly		
49-52	Antioch, Paul’s Second Missionary Journey Galatia, Asia, Macedonia: Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth	Jerusalem (2 nd visit) Galatia, Asia, Macedonia	<i>1 Thessalonians</i> Journey to Corinth Ministry in Corinth <i>2 Thessalonians</i>
51			Jerusalem (2 nd visit)
51-52			Antioch (Winter)
52	Journey to Ephesus		Journey to Ephesus (April-July) Galatia

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52-54	Ephesus <i>Galatians</i> (Spring) <i>Philippians</i> <i>Colossians</i> and <i>Philemon</i> <i>1 Corinthians</i>		Ephesus <i>Galatians</i> (Spring) <i>Philippians</i> <i>Colossians</i> and <i>Philemon</i> <i>1 Corinthians</i>
54	Unplanned visit to Corinth, Back to Ephesus, Troas <i>2 Corinthians</i>		Unplanned visit to Corinth, Back to Ephesus, Troas <i>2 Corinthians</i>
54-55	Macedonia		Macedonia (Winter)
55	Illyricum		Illyricum (Summer)
55-56	Corinth <i>Romans</i>		Corinth <i>Romans</i>
56-57	Journey to Jerusalem	Final visit to Jerusalem (offering visit)	Journey to Jerusalem (Summer)
57? 61?	Jerusalem – Caesarea		Jerusalem – Caesarea
61-62	Journey to Rome		Journey to Rome (Fall- Winter)
62-64	Rome		Rome
64			Spain
67	Death in Rome		Death in Rome

II. PAUL THE JEW AND THE ROMAN CITIZEN:

1. GROWING UP IN TARSUS

A. Paul does not tell us where he was born, but a number of texts contain an important hint:

Romans 11:1 I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.

Philippians 3:4-5 If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee;

Such a **concern to affirm his Jewish credentials betrays the expatriate, A JEW LIVING IN THE DIASPORA**. Only the descendants of those who emigrated from Ireland to the US find it necessary to insist that they are Irish. Those who are born and bred in Ireland take it for granted.

B. Luke tells us that he **PAUL CAME FROM TARSUS** (Acts 9,11.30; 11,25; 21,39; 22,3), which was the capital of Cilicia.

C. The city of Tarsus was **founded at the turn of the 9th and 10th centuries BC**. Its name probably comes from the Hittite *Tarku*, the name of a pagan god. The city mentioned in the campaigns of the Assyrian kings Esarhaddon, Shalmanassar I and Sennacherib.

Greek myths tie the city to Perseus and Triptolemus, and Hercules was to be imprisoned in Tarsus, which was commemorated on ancient coins.

The city belonged to the Hittite Empire, then it came under the rule of Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Alexander the Great and the Seleucids. Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 171 BC renamed it Antioch on the Cydnus.

During **the time of Pompey (67 B.C.)**, Tarsus was made **CAPITAL OVER THE ROMAN PROVINCE OF CILICIA**, and Jews began to receive Roman citizenship. **Antony**, who controlled the eastern provinces, **declared the city free in 42 B.C.** Tarsus continued to receive **special privileges** under **Augustus**, who exempted the city from imperial taxation because **Athenodorus**, his teacher and friend, **was a Tarsian. Tarsus grew into a cultural and intellectual center. Stoic philosophers like Athenodorus, Zeno, Antipater, and Nestor** lived in the city in the first century A.D.

Strabo reports that the city had a **SUPERB AND ANCIENT UNIVERSITY** while the inhabitants with enthusiastic seriousness sought education, even to the extent of leaving their homeland in pursuit of further knowledge. The city where Paul was born was well governed and prosperous. Its Greek orientation had to struggle with a strong Eastern spirit.

2. THE FAMILY OF PAUL:

A. Phil 3,5: “**HEBREW BORN OF HEBREWS**” and...a **ROMAN CITIZEN BY BIRTH** (Acts 22,27-28):

Acts 22:27-28 ²⁷ The tribune came and asked Paul, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" And he said, "Yes." ²⁸ The tribune answered, "It cost me a large sum of money to get my citizenship." Paul said, "But I was born a citizen."

The Hebrew pedigree of Paul

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; (Phil. 3:4-5 NRS)

²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. (2 Cor. 11:22 NRS)

Paul's identification means that he was **A DESCENDANT OF HEBREWS**, from the tribe of Benjamin, to whom Jerusalem belonged and where the influence of Hellenism was particularly

manifest (many Jews spoke Greek). Hebrew means also that despite his location in Diaspora **PAUL AND HIS FAMILY RETAINED THE ANCIENT TONGUE OF JEWS.**

The Roman Citizenship of Paul

²⁷ The tribune came and asked Paul, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" And he said, "Yes." ²⁸ The tribune answered, "It cost me a large sum of money to get my citizenship." Paul said, "But I was born a citizen." ²⁹ Immediately those who were about to examine him drew back from him; and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him. (Acts 22:27-29 NRS)

³⁵ When morning came, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go." ³⁶ And the jailer reported the message to Paul, saying, "The magistrates sent word to let you go; therefore come out now and go in peace." ³⁷ But Paul replied, "They have beaten us in public, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they going to discharge us in secret? Certainly not! Let them come and take us out themselves." ³⁸ The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens; ³⁹ so they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city.⁴⁰ After leaving the prison they went to Lydia's home; and when they had seen and encouraged the brothers and sisters there, they departed.(Acts 16:35-40 NRS)

How did Paul become a Roman citizen? There were three roads to citizenship: through the army, through liberation as a slave, through great merits for Rome.

B. According to JMO, The simplest hypothesis is that Paul's ancestors had **EMIGRATED FROM PALESTINE** within living memory. Jerome has a reference on Pauline origin:

"Paul the Apostle, previously called Saul, was not one of the Twelve Apostles; he was of the tribe of Benjamin and of the town of Goschala in Judea; when the town was captured by the Romans he migrated with his parents to Tarsus in Cilicia" (*De viris illustribus*, 5)

Jerome implies that Paul's parents were **FORCED TO MOVE TO TARSUS BY ROMANS**. The latter took control of Palestine in 63 BC and subsequently there were a number of occasions when Jews from various parts of the country were enslaved and shipped abroad (**61, 55, 52, 4 BC i 6 AD**). Terrible as it was, there were advantages, as Philo records – they might be freed by their owners. That Paul's father was equally fortunate is the simplest explanation of the Apostle's inherited Roman citizenship. **HIS FATHER MIGHT HAVE BEEN A SLAVE WHO WAS SET FREE BY A ROMAN CITIZEN OF TARSUS**, and who thereby acquired a degree of Roman Citizenship which improved with every succeeding generation.

Roman citizenship in the times of the republic and the first years of the empire, **extremely valuable, then loses its value.** In the first century, masters granted freedom and citizenship to such a number of slaves that **the emperors began to forbid it.**

3. A ROMAN NAME – PAULOS, the Greek version of the Latin *Paulus* might be a *praenomen* or *cognomen* inherited after some Roman family or simply a *signum* or *supernomen* (informal name used among family and friends, that becomes a part of person's identity).

St. Augustine interprets it in a spiritual way: *paullus* in Latin means "small". The name signifies the strategy of God who will make of Paul one of the greatest Apostles despite his weaknesses and human "smallness".

Paul does not have three classical Roman names: praenomen (own), nomen (ancestral), cognomen (family). **Perhaps the Latin** name instead of the Jewish one helps him function among the Gentiles.

Double name and identity. Gnilya: Saul - supernomen; Paulus - as a nomen very rare in Paul's day.

Paul's physical appearance. Similar to Hermes Acts 14:8-18; eye disease (Gal 4:13-14). stigmas (Gal 6:17); and thorn in the body, 2 Cor 12:7-10.

Acts of Paul and Thecla, 1:

At length they saw a man coming (namely Paul), of a small stature with meeting eyebrows, bald [or shaved] head, bow-legged, strongly built, hollow-eyed, with a large crooked nose; he was full of grace, for sometimes he appeared as a man, sometimes he had the countenance of an angel.

Malherbe, Abraham J., "A Physical Description of Paul", *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989, pp. 165-170.

Extremely strong as for the endured adversities.

4. PAUL'S RELATIVES – according to Luke Paul had a married sister whose son alerted the Roman authorities in Jerusalem to a plot to assassinate his uncle (Acts 23,16).

Acts 23:16 ¹⁶ Now the son of Paul's sister heard about the ambush; so he went and gained entrance to the barracks and told Paul.

5. EDUCATION – Paul was already grown when he left his home in Tarsus. He ventured into the world, as young men have ever done, when they had finished their basic education. Paul himself tells us nothing about his youth but we can make some deductions based on the existing educational system in Tarsus and on some traces in his letters.

A. There were pagan and Jewish schools, which children entered at the **AGE OF 6**. Both schools trained their pupils in the basic skills of **READING, WRITING, AND ARITHMETIC**, while at the same time inculcating knowledge of and respect for the institutions of state and religion. Thus Paul would have come to know **THE SCRIPTURE**, the Septuagint, the Bible of the Greek-speaking Jews (over 90 quotations in Pauline letters). Given his stress on the Jewish roots Paul must also have learnt **HEBREW AND ARAMAIC**. Jewish children in addition would read Euripides and Homer.

B. **SECONDARY STUDIES** began as soon as the student could read and write easily, normally about the age of 11. The focus was the transmitting of a whole culture in the works of such writers as **HOMER, EURIPIDES, MEANDER, DEMOSTHENES**. As the pupil's knowledge increased they practiced **LITERARY COMPOSITION**.

C. The obligatory education finished at the age of 12 or 13 years when the boy technically became a responsible person. The next step might be **GYMNASIUM TRAINING BODY AND RHETORICAL SKILLS**. Tarsus was famous for its rhetorical schools. The base of the rhetorical training was the theory of discourse, which included **LETTER WRITING**. The second stage involved the **STUDY OF THE SPEECHES** of the great masters of rhetoric. The final stage was **WRITING OF PRACTICE SPEECHES**.

Was Paul formed in such techniques? His social position argues affirmative, but he himself appears to deny it. However Paul's **disclaimers such as 2 Cor 11,6** should be taken as a rhetorical convention. Sometimes he simply decided not to use all his rhetorical arsenal that he **possessed and rely on the simplicity of the Gospel (1 Cor 2,4)**. His letters provided always with the epistolary salutation and ending, showing **traces of rhetorical disposition** with thesis and development of arguments, **abounding in literary and rhetorical figures** convince rather that Paul had a good rhetorical training.

Did Paul receive his Pharisaic training at home?

Authors such as Josephus and Philo, and Talmudic texts argue that the Jewish religious education was universal. Porter points out that the Jewish education overlaps to some extent with the Hellenistic one (from the age of 5 to 12).

The older school would argue that Paul's family could have a Pharisaic lineage. Paul lived in Tarsus with his family for a long time = there he received citizenship and was educated in the tradition of the Fathers (the family home cultivated the Pharisaic traditions) and Greek.

Others take the opposite position. Paul's family was not Pharisaic but Hellenized. Pharisaic belonging would prevent him from entering Hellenistic culture. Paul was a Greco-Roman citizen, which did not exclude the religious education he received at home.

According to Gnilya, who takes a well-balanced position, **Paul chooses the Pharisaic future on his own.** Paul becomes a Pharisee by his own choice in Jerusalem. He studies the Law and techniques for interpreting the Scripture, which will later be reflected in his letters (38). Although Paul is familiar with both Jewish and Hellenistic culture - he will be dominated by the Jewish pedigree and training - he rarely uses Greek literature references.

³ "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to our ancestral law, being zealous for God, just as all of you are today. (Acts 22:3 NRS)

6. PHARISEE IN JERUSALEM – we know that it was the custom of young men on Tarsus to leave “in order to complete their education abroad”, but why should Paul have thought it either necessary or appropriate to do so? It is easy to envisage an enthusiastic young man with a Greek education from a Romanized family desiring to **DISCOVER FOR HIMSELF THE CRADLE OF HIS RELIGION.**

Paul could have left for Jerusalem at the age of 15-20, i.e. around 20-25 AD. Since his conversion is dated in AD 34 this means that **he lived in Jerusalem for over 10/15 years** before becoming a Christian. **Luke refers to pre-Christian activity of Paul in Jerusalem** (Acts 8,1.3; 9,1-2) and **makes him confess that he was “brought to the city at the feet of Gamaliel”** (Acts 22,3).

SESSION II

A. A PHARISEE – The Pharisees emerge as a **political interest group deeply embroiled in the conflicts and the political life** of the first century AD. They were primarily a **society for table-fellowship**, the point of their life as a group. Their primary concern is **about ritual purity for meals and agricultural rules, observance of Sabbath and festivals.**

Gamaliel I was a successor of Hillel, his years of activity are thought to be roughly 20-50 AD. The image that comes across is the teacher who played an active role in deliberations of the Temple, one of the greatest Jewish rabbis of that time, which is precisely the portrait painted by Luke 5,34.

B. IF PAUL ARRIVED IN JERUSALEM IN 15 AD his sojourn in the city would have coincided with that of Gamaliel I and it is extremely improbable that Paul or any other Pharisee would have escaped his influence.

³⁴ But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, respected by all the people, stood up and ordered the men to be put outside for a short time. ³⁵ Then he said to them, "Fellow Israelites, consider carefully what you propose to do to these men." ³⁶ For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him; but he

was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and disappeared. ³⁷ After him Judas the Galilean rose up at the time of the census and got people to follow him; he also perished, and all who followed him were scattered. ³⁸ So in the present case, I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone; because if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; ³⁹ but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them-- in that case you may even be found fighting against God!" They were convinced by him, (Acts 5:34-39 NRS)

Porter points out the difference of characters between the two: Paul is more zealous than his moderate teacher. He will persecute Judeo-Christians of Hellenistic origin, considering them perhaps a corrupt form of Judaism.

He would have been also in the city when Jesus came on pilgrimage, and when he was crucified then in AD 30. His execution was likely to have been carried out without fanfare by the authorities amidst the indifference of the city preoccupied with preparations for Passover.

^{NRS} **2 Corinthians 5:16** From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. (2 Cor. 5:16 NRS)

C. The goal of the pharisaic studies is **TO KNOW THE LAW** and to make it one's fixed habit. The Pharisees prided themselves on meticulous observance; detailed knowledge of the commandments as articulated in both the written and oral Torah was obviously indispensable.

Galatians 1:14 ¹⁴ I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors.

Philippians 3:5 circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee

5. PERSECUTOR OF THE CHURCH:

A. He is first noticed as a youth (Acts 7,58) looking on with satisfaction at the grisly **EXECUTION OF STEPHEN** (Acts 8,1; 22,20). His next appearance is as the **ARCH-PERSECUTOR**, bursting into Christian houses and throwing their occupants into prison (Acts 9,1-2). It is confirmed by Paul:

Phil 3,6 ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

1 Corinthians 15:9 ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Galatians 1:13 ³ You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it.

B. If not putting to death Paul could **DENOUNCE INDIVIDUALS TO THE AUTHORITIES**. The simplest technique to flush out Christians would have been that mentioned by Luke (Acts 26,11) **to make them blaspheme, by demanding denial of Jesus and strict observance of Law**. If they refused, the synagogue had power to **excommunicate, exclude from the community life**, make such individuals live **a misery by frequent challenges, harassment, and threats**.

C. Why the persecutor? Even the **PHARISAIC CONCERN TO TRANSFORM THE JEWISH PEOPLE** through more exact instruction in the written and oral Law, the Pharisees would have been extremely sensitive to the fact that Jesus in his teachings propelled relativization of the Law. Any success of other teacher threatened their hoped-for monopoly.

There can be no doubt of what he was thinking of Christian claims. It was blasphemous to maintain that God had intervened to raise from the dead a false teacher whose claim to be the Messiah went hand in hand with deliberative subversion of the authority of the Law. Paul tried to turn Christians from their beliefs since they were disastrously misled.

III. PAUL, THE CONVERT:

1. The Apostle himself is very discrete in accounts on his conversion.

1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

1 Corinthians 15:8 ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

Galatians 1:12 ¹² for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Luke on the contrary describes it three times – Acts 9,1-22; 20, 22,6-17; 26,12-18.

2. ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS. Given this attitude, it is certain that Paul was in **no way disposed to expect anything to happen en route to Damascus**.

We know more from the three accounts of Luke in which Jesus appears to Paul, **identifies with the persecuted Christians and endows Paul with a new vocation** – bring the Gospel before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel.

Acts 9:1 Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³ Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" ⁵ He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶ But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." ⁷ The men

who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one.⁸ Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.

Paul now knew with the inescapable conviction of direct experience that the Jesus who had been crucified under Pontius Pilate was alive. Jesus therefore must be the Messiah. Equally the attitude of Jesus toward Law must be correct. The Law was not the definite expression of God's will. As grace had been available to Paul, so it also could be made accessible to those whom the Law had excluded.

In Acts 9: 3, Luke describes the light that surrounds Paul. He uses the verb *periastrapto*, which also appears in **4 Ma 4:10**, where it tells about the angels whose weapons shine around with a threatening glow, and who surround Apollonius to prevent the desecration of the temple. **The light that tightens around Paul resembles being surrounded by the overwhelming powers from on high.** Paul was defeated and taken prisoner on the road to Damascus. He is led into the city like a prisoner of war, by the hands.

Conversion or call?

Galatians 1:15-16¹⁵ But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased¹⁶ to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles (...).

What happened on the Damascus road?

The PBC document states that it was then that **the basic elements of Jesus' way and mission were revealed to Paul, at least his saving death and resurrection** (p. 40).

Probably, Paul discovers then that the one whose religious authorities of his nation recognized as **a false Messiah** and condemned him to a shameful death, **was resurrected by God from the dead.**

Already then, the thought of **the end of the Law** probably begins to arise in the apostle's mind, which becomes powerless in confront with Christ. If we should look somewhere for the roots of the **radical Pauline Gospel of grace, without the Law**, they are deeply rooted in the revelation that the apostle receives at Damascus.

Perhaps **Pauline ecclesiology is also born at Damascus**, in which the Church functions as the body of Christ (1 Cor 12-14).

Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Mission* (1984) - derives all Christology from the Damascus event (Christ, Lord, Son of God, image of God, typology Christ - Adam)

3. ARABIA. After his conversion Paul went to Arabia (Gal 1,17)

Galatians 1:15-21 ¹⁵ But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but **I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus.**

Arabia - a time of meditation (Longenecker) or evangelization?

The vast majority of scholars is in favor of evangelization (Gnilka, JMO, Porter). Gnilka. Arabia in Josephus is called Nabataea and stretches from the Euphrates to the Red Sea (A.J. 1.221; B.J. 1.89; 3.47; 5.160). Aretas IV ruled there between 9 and 40 AD. Paul preaches the Gospel in Arabia and Damascus. Perhaps Aretas does not rule the city, but he is the head of the Nabatean colony or city police that exists there.

Paul went to the Nabataean territory. He must have been doing something to draw attention to himself and arouse the ire of the Nabataeans because he had returned to Damascus and even three years later the Nabataean authorities still wanted to arrest him (Gal 1,17; 2 Cor 11,32-33). The only explanation is that **Paul is trying to make converts.**

4. DAMASCUS

A. Paul gives us no information on how he passed the next three years in Damascus (Gal 1,18). According to Luke, Paul's ministry was devoted to **THE CONVERSION OF JEWS** (Acts 9,20).

Aretas IV (AD 9 - AD 40) whom Paul mentions in 2 Corinthians 11:32 is the Nabataean king, father-in-law and fierce enemy of Herod Antipas, with whom he was at war. Since Antipas had dismissed Aretas's daughter by marrying the wife of Philip, his brother, the Nabataean ruler sought a revenge. He found it by seizing some border territories, which brought Roman intervention upon him. The period of Paul's stay in Arabia was a period of nervous anticipation by the Nabataeans for the Roman movement. A Jew could be understood in their town as a spy.

Besides, the explanation for Paul's flight is the fact that by preaching the Gospel, he won many Jewish converts there. Luke in Acts 9:23 speaks of the Jews who want to kill him in Damascus because he preached Christ as the Messiah with great power and conviction.

Corona muralis. Paul cannot count the episode in Damascus among his missionary achievements. The Apostle worked there for a long time as an evangelizer after his conversion (Acts 9:22). In a life-threatening situation, he fled the city, lowered from its walls in a basket. It is **not an act of courage** to leave a young Christian community in town to save one's own life. In antiquity, there was a reward for a soldier who first stood on the walls of a conquered city (*corona muralis*). Paul does the opposite, hurrying down from the walls of Damascus.

³² In Damascus, the governor under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize me, ³³ but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands. (2 Cor. 11:32-33 NRS)

B. LEARNING A TRADE. How did Paul support himself? He himself tells us that he worked **with his hands** (1 Thess 2,9; 2 Thess 3,7-9; 1 Cor 4,12). He speaks of **his work as hardship** (1 Cor 4,12; 2 Cor 6,5; 11,23.27), **qualifies it as “slavish”** (1 Cor 9,19). **No one bred to a craft work would speak of it in this way.**

Moreover according to the rabbinic texts any occupation would be **a distraction from the study of the Law**. There is no evidence that when Paul was a pharisaic student in the Holy City he was under **any pressure from his masters to learn the trade**. On the conversion to Christianity, however, **Paul would no longer be an acceptable recipient of institutionalized Jewish funds**, and he may have lost **contact with his family**. His **mission demanded also a mobility** which would enable him to reach out to the whole Gentile world. **Only financial independence could give him such freedom.**

Tent-makers could expect both public and private commissions in furnishing protection from the glaring summer sun. With this **silent skill** Paul needed only **a moon shaped knife, an awl, needles, and waxed thread**, and could be sure of **finding jobs in every road he traveled and on every sea he sailed**. Thus in terms of missionary strategy Paul chose wisely. **He acquired a skill whose products many needed**. It enabled him to **travel widely, although it would never make him rich**. It enabled him to survive.

σκηνοποιός, οὔ, ὁ

① *maker of stage properties* (acc. to Pollux 7, 189 the Old Comedy used the word as a synonym for μηχανοποιός=either a ‘stagehand’ who moved stage properties [as Aristoph., Pax 174] or a ‘manufacturer of stage properties’. Associated terms include σκηνογράφος Diog. L. 2, 125 and σκηνογραφία Arist., Poet. 1449a and Polyb. 12, 28a, 1, in ref. to painting of stage scenery) **Ac 18:3**. But if one understands σκηνή not as ‘scene’ but as ‘tent’ and considers it improbable that Prisca, Aquila, and Paul would have practiced such a trade in the face of alleged

acc. to **acc. to** = according to

Pollux **Pollux** , II A.D.—List 5

Aristoph **Aristoph** , V–IV B.C.—List 5

Diog. L. **Diog. L.** = Diogenes Laertius, III A.D.—List 5

Polyb **Polyb** , III–II B.C.—List 5

ref. **ref.** = reference(s)

religious objections (s. Schürer II 54–55 on Jewish attitudes towards theatrical productions), one would follow the traditional rendering

② *tentmaker*. This interpretation has long enjoyed favor¹

5. JERUSALEM

1. After three years Paul **FLED DAMASCUS**, never to return (Gal 1,17; 2 Cor 11,32-33). The Apostle heads to Jerusalem.

Gal 1,18:

¹⁸ Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days; ¹⁹ but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord's brother. ²⁰ In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!

Paul went there **TO SEE PETER**. He availed to the utmost of Peter's knowledge of the historical Jesus.

The time spent with the first of the apostles **was not long, true, but it must have been important to Paul**. To describe this visit, he uses the verb *historeo*, which means not only visiting, but also **visiting in order to obtain information**, to interrogate someone. As you can guess, the object of Paul's interest was not the life and person of Peter, but rather the person and mission of Jesus. He also meets Jacob (Ga 1:20).

According to Gnilka, it is also an important opportunity to get to know the Jerusalem Church and to win their trust. Paul meets Jacob and perhaps Barnabas.

6. THE MISSING YEARS

From Jerusalem Paul went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1,21).

One can deduce that he visited Antioch on the Orontes, the capital of the Roman province of Syria, and his home town of Tarsus in Cilicia. From this point there **is a 7/8 year gap in the record, from 37/38 to 44/45** when the letters again furnish us information about Paul's career.

The reason for the silence is **probably the failure of Paul's missionary efforts**. Others suggested that **Paul dedicated himself to studying the Scriptures** at that time.

It doesn't match his temperament. The fact that this time was a time of **activity without much fruit is evidenced** by the fact that **Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch**. He would not have

¹ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 928.

done so if Paul had been on a successful mission at the time. The theories that Paul was then evangelizing Galatia, Macedonia and Crete should also be rejected.

IV. Paul, the Evangelizer and Founder of Churches

1. The first Missionary Journey (45-46)

A. The first mention of Paul after the missing years is a mission of Paul and Barnabas in Cyprus and Asia Minor (c AD 45-46). It is the so called **FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY** of Paul described in Acts 13-14. The letters unambiguously confirm that at that time **Paul was working with Barnabas (Ga 2:1)** as **representative of the mission to the Gentiles (Ga 2:9)**. He might have joined the community of Antioch, whence he **was sent as assistant to Barnabas to evangelize the southern part of Asia Minor** (Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium and Lystra).

B. Luke tells about the journey it in Acts 13-14. I comprised: Antioch, Cyprus, Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe. The primary role was played by Barnabas.

In Cyprus Paul **wins with the magician Bar-Jesus (Elymas) by blinding him** and brings to faith a **Roman official Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:14)**. In **Antioch of Pisidia they preach to the Jews**, but when the crowds gather, the jealous **Jews throw them out of their borders**. The same happens **in Iconium (Acts 14)**. Knowing that **the Jews wanted to stone them Paul and Barnabas fled to Lystra**.

In **Lystra Paul heals a cripple**, upon which **the local inhabitants want to declare them gods**. The Jews from Antioch and Iconium stir up the crowds and stone Paul there. Paul survived, went to **Derbe, then to Pisidia, Pamphylia, Perga, Attalia, and sailed back to Antioch**.

¹¹ When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!"

¹² Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.

¹³ The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates; he and the crowds wanted to offer sacrifice. (Acts 14:11-13 NRS)

they scarcely restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.

¹⁹ But Jews came there from Antioch and Iconium and won over the crowds. Then they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.

²⁰ But when the disciples surrounded him, he got up and went into the city. The next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. (Acts 14:18-20 NRS)

2. 2ND MISSIONARY JOURNEY (47/48-50/51)

1. TO REINFORCE THE BROTHERS

A. The purpose of the journey is to look after the newly-founded churches:

"Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached The Word of The Lord and see how they are doing." (Acts 15:36)

Here Paul parts with Barnabas

³⁷ Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. ³⁸ But Paul decided not to take with them one who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in the work. ³⁹ The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. (Acts 15:37-39 NRS)

Thus Paul departs for his **SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY THAT WAS TO LAST MORE OR LESS 3 YEARS (AD 47/48 – 50/51)**.

B. The previous journey began by sailing to Cyprus, but this time he set out overland through Syria and Cilicia, to **REVISIT THE CHURCHES HE HAD EARLIER ESTABLISHED IN ASIA**, including those at Derbe, and then at Lystra where Timothy joined him (Acts 16:1-5). From there they continued northward through Phrygia and Galatia (Acts 16:6). Paul remained in Galatia for some time due to an unspecified illness (Galatians 4:13-14).

C. From Galatia, Paul then intended to travel northeastward through Bithynia, a region on the shore of the Black Sea, however "they tried to enter Bithynia, but The Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas." (Acts 16:7-8). Troas was on the shore of the The Aegean Sea - **JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF WAS DIRECTING PAUL** westward from Asia, where Paul had intended to remain, toward Greece.

PAUL WAS TAKING THE GOSPEL ACROSS TO EUROPE.

2. THE FOUNDATION OF THE NEW CHURCHES IN EUROPE:

A. At Troas, "During the night Paul had **A VISION OF A MAN OF MACEDONIA** standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." (Acts 16:9). Paul realized that the vision was a message from The Lord, so the very next day he sailed across the Dardanelles, also called the Hellespont, which separated him from Europe. It was a big step for Christianity *that The Spirit of Jesus Christ Himself was guiding*.

⁹ During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them. (Acts 16:9-10 NRS)

B. In Macedonia, churches were established through **PHILIPPI** (Acts 16:11-39), **THESSALONICA** (Acts 17:1-9), and Berea (Acts 17:10-15). The journey was not without its problems - Paul and Silas were often opposed by those who refused to believe, and were once thrown in jail for casting the spirit out of a fortune teller (Acts 16:16-40). It seems that **RIOTS AND MOBS WERE ALWAYS CLOSE AT HAND**.

C. To escape the deadly threats made against him, "the brothers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea. The men who accompanied Paul brought him to Athens and then left with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible." (Acts 17:14-15). It was then, while waiting for them, that Paul made his now-**FAMOUS VISIT TO ATHENS**.

D. From Athens Paul crossed over to **CORINTH**, the seat of the Roman government of Achaia. He remained there for a **YEAR AND A HALF**, spreading The Word to Jews and Greeks with much success. After numerous other spiritually profitable visits throughout the region, Paul then began making his homeward journey to Jerusalem. He was accompanied by **Aquila and Priscilla** as far as Ephesus. From there he made his way by sea, through Rhodes and Cyprus to Caesarea. From there he went up to Jerusalem.

3. PHILIPPI –the first European city to be evangelized by Paul.

Acts 16,11-39: teaching in the Synagogue, conversion of Lydia, driving out a daemon from the slave-girl, imprisonment and the miraculous liberation.

Philippi is the first European city to be evangelized by Paul. The apostle first **goes to the Jewish place of gatherings outside the city**, where he preaches the Gospel. Luke in Acts **then describes Lydia's conversion**. Paul and Silas faced those who refused to believe and were even **thrown into prison for freeing a slave girl possessed by a spirit** foretelling the future (Acts 16: 16-40).

4. LEARNING WITH THE THESSALONIANS

A. The initial ministry in Macedonia might be dated c. AD 48-49. The Macedonian churches were perhaps the communities that **GAVE PAUL THE GREATEST HAPPINESS**. **The divisions** that marred other foundations were virtually non-existent. More importantly, the quality of their communal life made them stand out as beacons of life and hope (1 Thess 1,6-8; Phil 2,14-16).

B. Thessalonica owes its name to Thessalonike, a half-sister of Alexander the Great. Her husband, Cassander, founded the city in 316 BC. When Macedonia was a Roman province in 146 BC Thessalonica became **THE CAPITAL**.

C. The letters indicate that the Thessalonian Christians were drawn from **the local indigenous population, from salaries employees, cut off from the sources of real wealth**. The admonition

to “work with your own hands” assumes that the community was recruited essentially from **THE WORKING CLASS** (1 Thess 4,11). The “**extreme poverty**” of Macedonian believers (2 Cor 8,2) explains why, despite unusually intense labor (1 Thess 2,9) **Paul needed to be helped more than once by the Philippians** (Phil 4,16). **Thesalonians met in tenements**, not in villas. Correspondingly the workshop was the scene of Paul’s ministry in Thessalonica.

D. URBAN LEGEND OF CABRIUS, the young man murdered by his two brothers, who was expected to return to aid the powerless and the city of Thessalonica – the figure of Jesus.

E. The question why Paul left Thessalonica is answered by Luke who blames the Jewish community there (Acts 17,5-10). Paul mentions also persecution that touched the Church from the part of their Pagan countrymen (1 Thess 2,14). The most efficient escape route would have been a ship to bring Paul south into a different Roman province, Achaia (Acts 17,14). **THE NEXT STOP IS ATHENS**.

5. ATHENS AND CORINTH

A. Paul preached in Athens **WITHOUT ANY SUCCESS**.

Acts 17:16-34 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and also in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him. Some said, "What does this babblor want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities." (This was because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) ¹⁹ So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus and asked him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰ It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means." ²¹ Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new. ²² Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus.

³² When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed; but others said, "**WE WILL HEAR YOU AGAIN ABOUT THIS.**" ³³ At that point Paul left them. ³⁴ But some of them joined him and became believers, including Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Why did Paul fail at the Aeropagus?

- 1) The Gospel without the Cross?
- 2) A futile discourse with philosophy?
- 3) A success? (converted Dionysius and Damaris)
- 4) The heart of Paul’s Gospel – the resurrection (Platonism, Epicurean and Stoic ideas)

B. At this time between Athens and Corinth Paul writes his first letter **1 THESSALONIANS (C. AD 50)**

1 Thessalonians is Paul's **first communication with the community since his flight**. Paul had been deeply worried that **PERSECUTION WOULD FORCE THE THESSALONIANS** to abandon Christianity (1 Thess 3,2-7). He had wanted to come to their aid personally, but he had been prevented (2,17). Instead he sent Timothy (3,2), and the good news the latter brought of the steadfastness of the Thessalonians (3,6) was the cause of the joy Paul now experienced and the occasion of this letter. The issue was also the Day of the Lord (1 Thess 5,2). Some of the community might have thought that the Day of the Lord had already come but secretly. Besides the issue at stake was the sort of those who died before the coming of the Lord.

C. Then Paul moved **FROM ATHENS TO CORINTH** (Acts 18,1; 2 Cor 1,19). Paul gives the impression of merely wandering west, with Rome perhaps as the vague long-term objective. Once he had established a community he felt free to move on, leaving its development to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The situation at Thessalonica forced him to recognize the need to stay in contact with his foundations.

D. Thus for the first time he had to think in terms of a base. Athens, badly hurt by the war with Rome, was **no longer either productive or creative**. Essentially a mediocre university town dedicated to the conservation of its intellectual heritage. **CORINTH, ON THE CONTRARY, WAS A WIDE OPEN BOOMTOWN**. San Francisco in the days of the California gold rush is perhaps the most illuminating parallel. Corinth questioned. It was a city of the self-made, and lived for the future. New ideas were guaranteed a hearing, not necessarily because of intellectual curiosity, but because profit could be found in the most unexpected places. **The atmosphere there was to Paul's advantage. The bustling emporium was no place for the gullible or timid;** only the tough survived. Traffic in, out, and through the city was intense. Boasts shuttled between Asia and Europe. Paul the possibility of influencing people from a great variety of areas, and converts could carry the gospel back to their own people.

E. PAUL'S SOJOURN IN CORINTH is recounted in some detail in Acts 18,1-18. Paul meets there his future friends and missionary societies – Priscilla and Aquila, Christians of the Jewish origin expelled from Rome by the decree of Claudius. Together with them he is **WORKING AS A TENTMAKER** while evangelizing and speaking to the Jews and in the synagogue. Here however he finds a fierce opposition, which makes him **ABANDON JEWISH AMBIENCE** and go to the Pagans (Titius Justus). **Paul's sojourn in Corinth lasts one year and six months and abounds in conversions and the apostolic successes** (Acts 18,18; 1 Cor 1; 16). **It arouses the jealousy of the Jews bring him before the tribunal of Gallio** accusing of breaking their laws and traditions. **The Roman proconsul of Achaia however is not interested in the Jewish religious quarrels and drops the case.**

F. Luke estimated that Paul's **STAY IN CORINTH LASTED EIGHTEEN MONTHS** (Acts 18,11). According to some scholars during this stay *2 Thessalonians* was written. From Corinth Paul sailed to for Syria, and, having crossed the sea, landed at Ephesus.

V. JERUSALEM AND ANTIOCH

1. JERUSALEM CONFERENCE (C. AD 51)

A. Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem as **DELEGATES OF THE CHURCH OF ANTIOCH**.

Galatians 2:1 ¶ Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. ² I went up in response to a revelation. Then I laid before them (though only in a private meeting with the acknowledged leaders) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure that I was not running, or had not run, in vain.

B. WHAT FORCED PAUL TO GO TO JERUSALEM?

Gal 2:4 ⁴ But because of **false believers** secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us-- ⁵ we did not submit to them even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might always remain with you.

Acts 15:1 Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "**Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.**" ² And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders. ³ So they were sent on their way by the church, and as they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the believers. ⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. ⁵ But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, "It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses." ⁶ ¶ The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter.

C. Paul himself describes "**certain false brothers**" who insisted on **THE CIRCUMCISION OF GENTILE CONVERTS**. At this stage of the history of the Church it was taken for granted by all, including Paul, that **salvation was related to the chosen people, who worshiped the one God**, and to whom he had sent his Messiah. The salvation question as far as Gentiles were concerned was: **how can they be integrated into God's messianic People?** The tremendous success of the missionary effort of the church in Antioch, which demanded only faith in Jesus Christ for conversion, brought home to some Law-observant Jewish Christians in Jerusalem that **their vision of the church as the flowering of Judaism was in serious danger**. If things were permitted to continue as they were, they foresaw themselves becoming a small minority. Such

Law-observant Jewish Christians had only two options: 1. Contest the validity of Paul's approach, 2. Attempt to convert Gentiles.

D. What must have been a long, complex, and stormy meeting in Jerusalem is compressed by Paul into two verses. Gal 2,4-10:

⁴ But because of false believers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us-- ⁵ we did not submit to them even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might always remain with you. ⁶ And from those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders (what they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)-- those leaders contributed nothing to me.

⁷ On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel for the circumcised ⁸ (for he who worked through Peter making him an apostle to the circumcised also worked through me in sending me to the Gentiles), ⁹ and when James and Cephas and John, who were acknowledged pillars, recognized the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰ They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do. (Gal. 2:4-10 NRS)

Paul's narrative is basically in agreement with Luke's account in the Acts. Luke first gives voice to Peter, who testifies to the gift of salvation and the Spirit to the Gentiles. He opposes the yoke of the Law and emphasizes salvation through the grace of Christ (Acts 15: 7-11). Paul and Barnabas bear testimony to Peter essentially on the basis of their missionary work. Then Jacob speaks, who supports Peter's position, formulating specific indications:

¹⁹ Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, ²⁰ but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood.(Acts 15:19-20 NRS)

THE GOSPEL IS THE ONE INDISPENSABLE CONDITION FOR SALVATION; everything else is secondary.

E. HOW DID PAUL PERSUADE JAMES, CEPHAS, AND JOHN?

Besides the guidance of the Spirit and arguments connected with the Gospel of Christ as the only way of salvation, perhaps Israel's **political situation might also be illuminating.** In the Roman empire **the Jews had certain rights** which were clearly and precisely defined in law. **The situation deteriorated seriously when Caligula came to power in 37 AD.** There were violent **outbursts of anti-Semitism in Alexandria (AD 38), the temple in Jerusalem was transformed into an imperial shrine (AD 39-41), in AD 41 Claudius closed the Roman synagogue and expelled the Jews from the city.** To circumcise Gentile converts was to accept

them publicly as Jews, even though they had no attachment to Judaism; they were followers of Christ not of Moses. **What loyalty to the Jewish people could be expected of such individuals when hostile pressures began to take their toll?** In a crisis could and nationalistic Jew really trust them? Would such nominal Jews be prepared to sacrifice their lives for the Temple and the Law?

F. The leaders of the Jerusalem church might have been also swayed by **the very practical considerations**. Paul expresses the agreement reached in Jerusalem thus (Gal 2,9):

Galatians 2:9 ⁹ and when James and Cephas and John, who were acknowledged pillars, recognized the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

Jerusalem accepted that **PAUL NEED REQUIRE NOTHING MORE OF THE GENTILES THAN FAITH IN JESUS, he and Barnabas did not have to circumcise their converts**. But on the other hand, the other **Jewish Christian missionaries were free to circumcise their recruits**. Thus Paul and Barnabas were free to accept converts from both Judaism and paganism, as were their opponents. This agreement from the one hand demonstrates **openness of the mother-church in Jerusalem which avoids being reduced to one of the sects of Judaism**. From the other hand such arrangements were **a permanent source of tension because** they were continually renegotiable, as the case of the Church of Antioch illustrates.

2. THE CONFLICT IN ANTIOCH

A. ANTIOCH WAS THE THIRD LARGEST CITY IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE (c. 100 000 – 500 000 inhabitants in AD 100), surpassed only by Rome and Alexandria. The original population was assembled from **Macedonians, Athenians, and Jews, plus some native Syrians**. Luke's account attributes the foundation of the church to **"certain people from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, having come to Antioch, spoke to the Greeks"** (Acts 11,20). It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called "**Christians**."

B. PAUL WORKED THERE AFTER HIS CONVERSION TOGETHER WITH BARNABAS, the church accepted his teaching on **the salvation without the Law** and became his **basis**. The church in Antioch **flourished**. Unlike the Jews whose synagogues were legally recognized public meeting-places, the first Christians had to make do with the hospitality offered by the more affluent members of the community. In this context the most important links of the community appeared to be **table-fellowship embracing both Jewish and Pagan Christians**. The delicate **balance was suddenly destroyed** by the arrival of a delegation from Jerusalem. Gal 2:12:

Galatians 2:11-21 ¹¹ ¶ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; ¹² for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the

circumcision faction. ¹³ And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

C. Prior to the arrival of the certain people from James (Jewish Christians from Jerusalem) **Peter had no difficulty eating regularly in Gentile house-churches.** But then he drew back and ended up by stopping completely. And **the rest of the Jewish believers joined him** in playing the **hypocrite.** A **barrier rose between Jewish and Gentile house-churches.** What had the people sent by **James insisted? Separation demanded by the Law** – the Jews were not permitted to eat together with the Gentiles. **Peter in this situation decided to support those who needed him the most.** The Jewish church was struggling, and would be shattered by the defection of one of its most important figures.

D. For Paul the shock of being hoist with his own petard proved to be providential incentive to rethink his **VISION OF A MIXED JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN LOCAL CHURCH.**

Galatians 2:14-21 ¹⁴ But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" ¹⁵ We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; ¹⁶ **yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.** And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law. ¹⁷ But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! ¹⁸ But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor. ¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; ²⁰ and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God; **for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.**

E. He now recognized that if the Law was given the tiniest toe-hold in a local church it would ultimately take over. If did not immediately become antinomian in Antioch, he was well on the way to perceiving the fundamental incompatibility of the Law and Christ. **LAW WAS IN HIS EYES A DANGEROUS RIVAL TO CHRIST.** It also jeopardized the essential unity between Jewish and Pagan Christians.

F. Paul does not inform us **WHO PREVAILED IN THIS CONFLICT.** His silence however, tells its own story. Had he won, he could hardly have failed to mention it in Galatians. The fact that Barnabas had aligned himself with the delegation from Jerusalem left Paul completely isolated. He no longer felt at home in Antioch, which in fact became a Jewish Christian church. Sometime in AD 52 when the gorge through the Taurus mountains known as the Cilician Gates was passable, **PAUL LEFT ANTIOCH.**

VI. THE 3RD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

The first stage of the journey was **overland in Asia Minor, through the cities of the regions of Galatia and Phrygia**, including **Tarsus and Iconium**. He eventually reached **EPHESUS**, where he remained for **nearly three years** (Acts 19:1-41).

Paul then left for **MACEDONIA**, and after traveling through the area, arrived in **GREECE**, where he remained for three months (Acts 20:1-3). While awaiting to sail for Syria, Paul discovered another plot against him, so he instead returned through Macedonia (Acts 20:3). Upon reaching **PHILIPPI** he sailed across to Troas (Acts 20:6).

From Troas, Paul made his way through Assos, Mitylene, Kios, Samos and Miletus (Acts 20:13-16). It was at Miletus that the church elders from **EPHESUS** came up to meet with him for the last time (Acts 20:17-38).

Paul then made the final stage of the voyage, by way of Cos, Rhodes, Patara, Cyprus, and then over to Syria where he landed at Tyre. From there he made his way through Ptolemais, Caesarea, and finally up to **JERUSALEM**.

THE YEARS IN EPHESUS.

A. PAUL'S CHOICE OF EPHESUS for his **second long-term base** was as well thought out as his earlier selection of Corinth. **The centrality of this city** on the western coast of Asia Minor with respect to the churches he had previously founded was crucial. Around 286 BC the city was given its present location by **Lysimachus, a companion and successor of Alexander the Great**. The majesty of the wall he built (7m high; 3 m wide; and 9km long) was accentuated by their position on the hills.

B. With his arrival Paul FOUNDED THE CHURCH OF EPHESUS C. AD 52/53

C. We know from the Acts of the Apostles that his apostolic mission in this city was PARTICULARLY FRUITFUL.

Paul did tremendous work in Ephesus, preaching and teaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God permitted **many miracles to be done through him, including the healing of the sick and casting out of demons** (Acts 19:11-12). Even **sorcerers** turned from their evil practices and repented upon witnessing the power of God (Acts 19:17-20).

As was so often the case, Paul eventually found himself in **grave danger from idol worshipers**, in this case that of the **pagan god Artemis (also known as "Diana of the Ephesians")**, and those who were in the business of supplying them (Acts 19:24-27). He exposed their fraud, and in return they nearly killed him (Acts 19:28-41).

D. HERE ALSO PAUL WAS IMPRISONED. According to Acts his sojourn here was entirely peaceful but Paul himself states that he experienced a life-threatening situation in Ephesus (1 Cor 15,32; 2 Cor 11,23). In the prison Paul according to some scholars might have written two letters – *Philemon* and *Philippians*.

E. Here also Paul writes his two important letters: *GALATIANS* AND *I CORINTHIANS*. These however are connected with the crisis that touched the Pauline churches.

VII. CONFLICT IN GALATIA.

1. The Galatians were **MEMBERS OF THE CELTIC TRIBES**. The Celts or Galatians – the names are used interchangeably by the classical sources – who moved into Asia Minor were not the usual type of mercenaries. Warriors made up a half of the 20,000 who crossed the Bosphorus. They brought their wives and children, they were a nation on the move, searching for a homeland.

2. The problems which developed among the Christians of Galatia were not intrinsic tensions, they were caused by **outsiders, who attempted to persuade the Galatians to adopt a vision of Christianity which was radically different from that of Paul**. The adversaries were **Jewish Christians (Gal 6,13)**. Where did these people come from? They might have come from **Jerusalem or Antioch**. When they arrived they had two tasks. First, they had to undermine the authority of Paul, they had to discredit him. Secondly, they had to put across their version of Christianity with clarity and power. They could not simply say that Paul was wrong. They had to propose a viable alternative.

VIII. CONFUSION AND CRISIS AT CORINTH.

1. The Corinthians proved to be **THE MOST EXASPERATING CHURCH** with which Paul had to deal. The impression of his preaching exacerbated a positive genius on their part for misunderstanding him. **Virtually every statement that he made took root in their mind in a slightly distorted form**, and from this defective seed flowered bizarre approaches to different aspects of the Christian life. The Corinthians correspondence discloses also the complex nature of the Apostle. In it the Apostle lays bare his soul.

2. The intensity of Paul's relation with the Corinthians is illustrated by the fact that he **WROTE MORE LETTERS THAN TO ANY OTHER CHURCH**. The New Testament contains only two letters, but these mention two others, the Previous Letter (1 Cor 5,9) and the Painful Letter (2 Cor 2,4). Hence four in all.

3. More is known about the composition of the community of Corinth than of any other. **THE POTENTIAL FOR DISSENSION** within the community was evident. **Most members had in common only their Christianity**. They **differed widely in educational attainment, financial resources, religious background, political skills, and above in their expectations**. The best example is **Apollos**, the convert who came to Corinth from Ephesus some time after Paul's

departure for Jerusalem (Acts 18,24-28; 1 Cor 3,6). He was a **brilliant rhetorician and the knower of philosophy** who quickly found a niche in the competitive world of the Corinthian church. Paul's preaching on the contrary was **anti-intellectual**. He proclaimed a crucified Christ as the exemplar of authentic humanity (1 Cor 2,1-5). He also disappointed those believers who wanted aspired to a real theology. Thus an Apollos and Paul group appeared on the scene. Apparently there was also a third group claiming allegiance to Cephas (1 Cor 1,12).

4. The formation of these groups and rise of the **FRACTIONS** were even facilitated by the fact that the church at Corinth was **too numerous to be accommodated comfortably at the Eucharist** in a single house. The disparity of treatment at the liturgical meal highlights another division. Among the believers at Corinth there were slaves and have nots, and the elite exhibited little or no concern for the latter (1 Cor 11,22).

5. If we look closely at 1 Cor 1-4 a group emerges whose members believed that their possession of wisdom made them perfect (2,6). As possessors of the Spirit which is from God they were **SPIRIT-PEOPLE** (2,15). It is natural to infer that the spirit-people were those who denied the resurrection (1 Cor 15,12). Death for them was a liberation from the weight and defilement of body. Here we also see the background of the Corinthian sayings "all things are lawful for me" (1 Cor 6,12; 10,23). The belief in moral irrelevance of the body enabled the spirit-people to indulge their sexual appetites (1 Cor 5,1-8; 6,12-20) and to eat what they wished (1 Cor 8-10). The importance that some Corinthians attached to glosolalia (1 Cor 12-14) is drawn into this pattern.

7. TROUBLES DO NOT FINISH.

A. When Paul finished writing 1 Corinthians and dispatched it with the returning delegation he thought of visiting Macedonia. These plans were completely disrupted by the need to make **AN UNPLANNED VISIT TO CORINTH**. Much of what happened when Paul got to Corinth is shrouded in obscurity. The concise notice hidden in 2 Cor 2,1-11 concerns the offence made by an individual on Paul personally and the fact that members of the church did not manifest the personal loyalty to the Apostle. Paul could not stay in Corinth and perhaps he recognized that his presence was only exacerbating the situation. He comes back to Troas from where he sends his Painful Letter (2 Cor 2,4) which has been lost. Titus is sent with the letter while Paul awaits him impatiently moving to Troas. The letter has a salutary effect, the community repents so that Paul sends them milder in tone and friendly letter – **2 CORINTHIANS**.

B. However when Paul finishes its ninth chapter (2 Cor 1-9) **THE ALL OF A SUDDEN SITUATION DETERIORATES SERIOUSLY**. Fresh news comes from Corinth, reporting the presence of the **OUTSIDERS, JEWISH CHRISTIANS**, who challenge the Pauline apostleship. They stress that Paul did not know the earthly Jesus (10,7), he does not receive the money from the community, but lives of his own work (11,), he is not a great rhetorician and proves to be weak in dealing with community (2 Cor 10). The attack on the apostle is only the first step. Once the authority of Paul

removed the outsiders might pass to the Corinthians their own gospel (2 Cor 11,4). Paul sees the community in a great danger. He adds to already existing 2 Cor 1-9 four more chapters, 10-13 containing a passionate defense of his model of apostleship. Once again from the further development of the events we may presume that **PAULINE LETTER SUCCEEDED**. Paul proceeds through Thessalonica, Philippi to Corinth where he spends a couple of months (Acts 20,1-3) (AD 55-56). It would not be possible in a hostile community. Paul wins maybe one of the most crucial battles for the future of the Corinthian and of the universal Church. It will not find itself under the influence of the Jewish Christians like Antioch. There in the friendly Corinthian community the synthesis of his pastoral experience is composed – **THE LETTER TO ROMANS**, which should pave Paul's way to the evangelization of Spain (Rm 15,24).

IX. THE LAST YEARS:

1. JERUSALEM ON THE HORIZON:

A. In the final part of his letter to Romans Paul asks the community to pray so that his service to the saints may be acceptable to the saints (Rom 15,31-32). Paul is going to Jerusalem to offer the collection of the Christian churches for the mother church. Paul is afraid not only of the **PALESTINIAN JEWS WHO TREAT HIM AS A RENEGADE**. He is also concerned about the **REACTION OF THE JEWISH CHRISTIANS** with James who know that Paul's position hardened, he sees in Law a rival of Christ. Paul is wondering if James would accept a gift with which he is so intimately associated.

Acts 20:22-23 ²² And now, as a captive to the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and persecutions are waiting for me.

Acts 21:11-13 ¹¹ He came to us and took Paul's belt, bound his own feet and hands with it, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, "This is the way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'" ¹² When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³ Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

B. Luke provides a long account of Paul's journey to Jerusalem with the collection (Acts 20,3-21,17). He is aware of so many details because he derives his whole narrative **FROM THE TRAVEL JOURNAL**, on of the oldest sources of Acts, which was the work of an eyewitness. It is a list of times and places, which correspond very closely with the theory and practice of coastal navigation in antiquity. Starting from Philippi each day the boat made what distance the wind permitted, as it worked south along the coast of Asia Minor, and sought a harbor for a night. Only in Miletus Luke inserts Paul's major discourse to the Elders. Paul uncertain of his sort in

Jerusalem alerts the Elders to the fact that henceforth they would have sole responsibility for the church of Ephesus (Acts 20,28).

C. RECEPTION IN JERUSALEM. Since the time of Jerusalem Conference c. AD 51 **Paul became a radical antinomian.** Now carrying the collection for the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem he must have asked himself a question how it would be **received by the Jewish Christians.** The **gesture from the part of Paul was necessary,** which would confirm that Paul did not reject his Jewishness. The simplest act and the minimum would have been **the purification required of all Jews coming from the pagan territory, and who wished to enter the Temple** (sprinkling with the water of atonement on the third and seventh day).

Acts 21:20-26 ²⁰ When they heard it, they praised God. Then they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands of believers there are among the Jews, and they are all zealous for the law. ²¹ They have been told about you that you teach all the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and that you tell them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs. ²² What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. ²³ So do what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow. ²⁴ Join these men, go through the rite of purification with them, and pay for the shaving of their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself observe and guard the law. ²⁵ But as for the Gentiles who have become believers, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication." ²⁶ Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having purified himself, he entered the temple with them, making public the completion of the days of purification when the sacrifice would be made for each of them.

D. TRAGICALLY, this plan was initiated but never terminated. **Before the seven days** of his purification were completed the second danger that Paul anticipated became a reality. **Non-Christian Jews attempted to lynch him.**

Acts 21:27-32 ²⁷ ¶ When the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, who had seen him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd. They seized him, ²⁸ shouting, "Fellow Israelites, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against our people, our law, and this place; more than that, he has actually brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." ²⁹ For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. ³⁰ Then all the city was aroused, and the people rushed together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut. ³¹ While they were trying to kill him, word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. ³² Immediately he took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. When they saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

E. THE GARRISON IN THE ANTONIA INTERVENED TO SAVE HIM. Thereafter he was in Roman custody. From this point Luke depicts the life of Paul as resembling more and more **the last days of Jesus**. We have a number of discourses in which **Paul addresses his compatriots** (Acts 22,1-22), **Sanhedrin** (Acts 23,1-10), **is rejected by them and becomes a victim of the plot** (Acts 23,12-15). Paul's **nephew** receives the notice on the ambush and warns Paul. The Roman tribune informed by Paul decides to send the **prisoner to Cesarea**, under the custody of the governor **Felix** (23,16-35). There he faces accusations of the Jews and hearings before the governor who waiting for the bribe and trying to please the Jews keeps Paul in prison (Acts 24,26).

When Felix is succeeded by the new **governor Festus** Paul is proposed to go to Jerusalem to **resolve finally the case with the Jews**. Then knowing of the plot and trap in Jerusalem he decides to make a desperate step – as a Roman **citizen he appeals to Cesar himself** (Acts 25,10-11). The answer of Festus may be only one. Acts 25,12: "You have appealed to the emperor; to the emperor you will go." Paul is about to leave for his last journey, the journey to Rome.

2. ROME

A. THE VOYAGE TO ROME began in early autumn of about 58 AD, and was completed the following spring after a spectacular shipwreck caused by a great storm in The Mediterranean Sea. The entire voyage is recorded in Acts chapters 27 and 28.

They reach the Fair Havens in Crete, where Paul advises to spend winter (Acts 27: 9-10). The centurion, however, decides to travel along the coast of Crete. Then **a violent storm strikes them**, lasting **two weeks** (Acts 27:14-27). Paul **encourages the crew** by assuring them that they will **reach Rome**, as **God's angel had told him** (Acts 27: 23-26). The **apostle prevents the flight crew from escaping** and cheers everyone up (Acts 27: 27-40). Eventually, the **ship runs aground** and breaks, and they land in Malta (Acts 27: 40-44). Paul survived the viper bite and healed the father of the island governor, **Publius**, as well as many sick people on the island, winning the favors of Romans (Acts 28: 1-10).

In AD 59 Paul reaches his final destination – Rome (Acts 28,14).

B. Surprisingly **LUKE DOES NOT DESCRIBE THE MARTYRDOM OF PAUL**. His account finishes with the image of the Apostle who **being allowed to live by himself**, only with **one soldier guarding him**, dedicates himself to the meetings with **the Jews convincing them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets (Acts 28,23)**. Many were convinced, others refused to believe. Seeing their reluctance and stubbornness Paul declares: **"Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen."** That is the perfect finale of the Acts of the Apostles in which Luke wanted to show how the **Gospel reaches the ends of the earth**. We are told that Paul stayed **two more years in Rome** teaching without any hindrance.

According to the Tradition, during Paul's stay in Rome, prison letters were written – Philemon, Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians and the so-called pastoral letters – 1-2 Timothy and Titus.

C. WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? According to some scholars c. AD 61/62 Paul undertook his long planned **JOURNEY TO SPAIN**, which however did not bring any special fruits.

It is mentioned by Clement of Rome (95 AD):

Had been seven times in bonds, had been driven into exile, had been stoned, had preached in the East and in the West, he won the noble renowns which was the reward of his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and having reached the farthest bounds of the West.

and in the Muratorian Canon (c. 180 AD):

For the 'most excellent Theophilus' Luke summarizes the several things that in his own presence have come to pass, as also by the omission of the passion of Peter he makes quite clear, and equally by (the omission) of the journey of Paul, who from the city (of Rome) proceeded to Spain.

Tarragona would have been the most likely city for the apostle's mission to Spain. Known as Colonia Julia Victrix Triumphalis Tarraco to commemorate the victories of Julius Caesar, the city was made the seat of one of the four assize courts established in Hispania Citerior.

Sailing from Rome to Spain was quite simple and took 4 to 7 days.

Why is there no mention of this trip? Perhaps because it ended in failure. **Priscilla and Aquila could go with Paul.** Spain was highly **Latinized**. The language could be a problem, and there was **no synagogue network**. Doubts about the person of Paul could also be raised, and we have a mention of them in 2 Tim (Paul abandoned in prison).

The mission lasts only a few months. Then Paul returns and visits **the Churches in the East: Troas, Ephesus, Miletus, Corinth, Epirus.** Perhaps he is caught there, or perhaps he returns to Rome, upon the news of the fire and persecution of Christians.

D. IN AD 64 A GREAT FIRE RAGED IN ROME FOR 9 DAYS and destroyed 10 of 14 quarters of the city. Despite Nero's concern for homeless, his replanning of the city in order to ensure that the tragedy would not be repeated, and his propitiation of every god who might have felt slighted, the idea circulated that the emperor had resorted to a rather drastic type of urban renewal. According to the *Annals* of Tacitus:

“To suppress the rumors Nero fabricated scapegoats, and punished with every refinement the notoriously depraved Christians. Their deaths were made farcical. Dressed in wild animals' skins, they were torn to pieces by dogs, or crucified, or made into torches to be ignited after dark as substitutes for daylight. Nero provided his Gardens for the spectacle, and exhibited displays in the Circus, at which he mingled with the crowd, or stood in a chariot, dressed as a charioteer.”

THE PERSECUTIONS BEGAN IN AD 65 and eventually they reached also Paul. Eusebius, the church historian confirms that Peter and Paul were both martyred in the Neronian persecution:

“It is recorded that in Nero’s reign Paul was beheaded in Rome itself, and that Peter likewise was crucified and the record is confirmed by the fact that the cemeteries there are still called by the names of Peter and Paul” (*History of the Church*, 2.25).

It is dated by Jerome’s translation of the *History of the Church* for AD 67/68.

Others date Paul’s death for 64/65 or between 64-67 AD.

E. THE LAST DAYS OF PAUL in roman prison describes 2 Timothy 4,6-8:

⁶ As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come.

⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

F. ARCHEOLOGISTS DISCOVER ST. PAUL'S TOMB

Rome, Feb. 17 (CWNNews.com) - Vatican archeologists believe that they have identified the tomb of St. Paul in the Roman basilica that bears his name.

A sarcophagus which may contain the remains of St. Paul was identified in the basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, reports Giorgio Filippi, a archeology specialist with the Vatican Museums. The sarcophagus was discovered during the excavations carried out in 2002 and 2003 around the basilica, which is located in the south of Rome. Having reached what they believe is a positive identification of the tomb, Vatican experts will soon make a public announcement of their discovery. "The tomb that we discovered is the one that the popes and the Emperor Theodosius (379- 395) saved and presented to the whole world as being the tomb of the apostle," Filippi reports.

The discovery was made by a team composed exclusively of experts from the Vatican Museum. They had undertaken their exploration in response to a request from the administrator of St. Paul's basilica, Archbishop Francesco Gioia. During the Jubilee Year 2000, the archbishop noticed that thousands of pilgrims were inquiring about the location of St. Paul's tomb. The excavation effort was guided by 19th-century plans for the basilica, which was largely rebuilt after a devastating fire in 1823.

An initial survey enabled archeologists to reconstruct the shape of the original basilica, built early in the 4th century. A second excavation, under the main altar of the basilica, brought the Vatican team to the sarcophagus, which was located on what would have been ground level for the original 4th-century building.

Under the altar a marble plaque was still visible, dating back to the 4th century, and bearing the inscription: "Apostle Paul, martyr." Filippi remarks that surprisingly, "Nobody ever thought to look behind that plaque." When the Vatican team looked, they found the sarcophagus.

PAUL, HIS LIFE

Ann Seton Parish 2022

As an archeologist, Giorgio Filippi says that he has no special curiosity to learn whether the remains of St. Paul are still inside that sarcophagus. The tomb should not be opened merely to satisfy curiosity, he insists. There is no doubt, he says, that St. Paul was buried on the site, "because this basilica was the object of pilgrimages by emperors; people from all around the world came to venerate him, having faith that he was present in this basilica."

The Vatican archeologist said that Church officials would now have to decide whether to undertake further explorations around the tomb, to make the sarcophagus more visible. Archbishop Gioia, questioned about that possibility, was noncommittal. The prelate affirmed only that he would like to "make known the figure of St. Paul and the historic reality" that he is buried in the basilica. According to tradition, St. Paul died under the Emperor Nero, sometime between the years 64 and 67. The Emperor Constantine began the construction of a basilica on the site of his death, along the Ostian Way, in 386; the building was enlarged and completed a half-century later.

In St. Peter's Basilica, excavations that were begun in June 1939 finally uncovered the tomb of the first Pope in 1941. But it was 35 more years before the Church officially attested to the authenticity of those remains, in a statement released by Pope Paul VI in June 1976.

A similar span of years could elapse before the Church confirms that the tomb discovered in St. Paul's Basilica is truly that of the apostle--if such an affirmation can ever be made. But the archeologist whose team discovered the tomb is already convinced.