Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles

Introduction to Paul and Acts

Exposition of Acts 13-28

by

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Preface

Luke is the most prolific writer in the New Testament, at least in terms of length. The Book of Acts is the second of his two large works, and while it aims at recounting the history of the earliest Christian communities, it also offers a theological message that is intertwined with this history. Central to this message is the preaching of the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles. Saul of Tarsus, better known as Paul, was the man above all others who led the Christian advance into uncharted, non-Jewish territory. The record of his missionary journeys and his trip to Rome occupy the latter half of the Book of Acts. In his travels Paul preached in some of the most important cities of the Greco-Roman world-Antioch, Thessalonica, Philippi, Ephesus, Corinth, Athens and Rome itself.

This is his story as given to us by Luke in the New Testament. Some of the information for this story is first hand, for Luke uses first person pronouns for several sections of this history when he was personally in Paul's company. Other portions must derive from the traditions of the church and personal research. If Luke tells us that he investigated carefully the story of Jesus in writing his gospel (cf. Lk. 1:1-4), we should expect no less in his writing of the story of Paul.

Paul, the Man

Personal Background

Paul describes his personal background in several places. He was a Jew of the Diaspora and a citizen of Tarsus, the capital of the Roman province of Cilicia (Ac. 21:39). The term πολιτης (*polites* = citizen) probably meant that his name appeared on the roster of Tarsus' citizens and that he was born into a family that held citizenship. In fact, as Paul claimed, he was born a Roman citizen (Ac. 22:26-28; cf. 16:37), a privilege that meant his father was a Roman citizen before him. How Paul's Jewish family attained citizenship we are not told. Perhaps his father rendered some special service to the Roman cause.[1] As a citizen, Paul would have had three names, the *praenomen* (forename), *nomen gentile* (family name) and *cognomen* (additional name). We know only his *cognomen*, Paullus. Of course, he also had a Jewish name, Saoul (sometimes spelled Saulos), which transliterates into English as Saul.[2]

Tarsus, the city of Paul's birth, maintained a large textile industry, and it is probably due to this industry that Paul learned his trade as a tentmaker (Ac. 18:3; cf. 1 Th. 2:9; 2 Th. 3:8). Roman writers speak of a local material manufactured in Tarsus called *cilicum*, a coarse cloth of woven goat's hair.[3]

Elsewhere, Paul also says that he was a "Hebrew of Hebrews" (Phil. 3:6). His Jewish pedigree was impeccable. He was descended from the clan of Benjamin (Ro. 11:1), and it is likely that his Jewish name, Saul, was bestowed upon him in memory of Benjamin's greatest hero (cf. 1 Sa. 9:1-2). His claim to be a "Hebrew" carries more weight than simply that he was Jewish (cf. 2 Co. 11:22), for the term distinguished him from Hellenistic Jews who attended Greek-speaking synagogues. Hebraistic Jews, on the other hand, attended Aramaic or Hebrew-speaking synagogues. Paul's expertise in Hebrew/Aramaic was somewhat a surprise to the Jews in Jerusalem (Ac. 21:40-22:2), but it can hardly be doubted that it was his mother tongue, since God's call to him on the Damascus Road was in Hebrew/Aramaic (Ac. 26:14). Furthermore, though he was a citizen of Tarsus, he grew up in Jerusalem, studying under the great Jewish teacher Gamaliel, the leading Pharisaic scholar of the day (Ac. 22:3; cf. 26:5). Even after he became a Christian, Paul was not adverse to maintaining the claim that he, like his father before him, was

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[1] F. Bruce, *Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 35, 37.

[2] The idea that Saul's name was changed to Paul when he became a Christian is without foundation.

[3] Bruce, p. 35.

still a Pharisee (Ac. 23:6).[4]

Conversion

Paul once described his conversion as the moment when Christ "took hold of him" (Phil. 3:12). This about-face occurred while Paul was serving as the official antagonist against Christians (Ga. 1:13-14; 1 Co. 15:9; Phil. 3:6), a sect that called themselves "the Way" (Ac. 9:1-2; 19:9, 23; 22:4, 14, 22).[5] Saul had even participated in the lynching of a Hellenistic Jewish Christian in Jerusalem (Ac. 7:58; 8:1). He was on his way to Damascus, extradition papers in hand, to serve a summons on all Jews who had accepted the teachings of The Way (Ac. 22:4-5). In his mind the notion of a crucified messiah-at least one who was the real messiah-was absurd. (There had been no end to false messiahs, most of whom ended up crucified.)[6] A crucified messiah, of course, was virtually a false messiah by definition, and in any case, no self-acclaimed leader who had been hung from a tree could be the hope of Israel. Such a person was under a divine curse (Dt. 21:32). The idea of a crucified messiah was a self-contradiction.

The shock could not have been greater than when Paul was struck down on the Damascus Road amidst a blinding, heavenly light and confronted by a voice from heaven that could only have come from God (Ac. 9:3-6). When Paul asked, "Who are you, Lord?", the voice came back in Aramaic/Hebrew, "I am Jesus!" Temporarily blind, Paul was led into the city where he met Ananias, a Christian who baptized him as a new convert to Christ (Ac. 9:8-19).[7] For Paul, this encounter with the resurrected Christ was comparable to what the original apostles experienced after Easter (1 Co. 9:1; 15:8). It was for him the gospel by revelation (Ga. 1:11-12, 15-17). Of course, in spite of Paul's defense of the gospel by revelation, he also places importance on the gospel as handed down by the apostles, too (1 Co. 15:1-4, 11; 11:23).[8]

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[4] Paul's claim, εγω φαρισαιος ειμι(=I am a Pharisee), appears in the present, emphatic tense.

[5] The term "Christian" did not arise until later (Ac. 11:26). Early on, especially within the Palestinian Jewish community, the title of choice for the followers of Jesus was "The Way".

[6] N. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), pp. 170-181.

[7] I have used the traditional language of "conversion," though some argue that it is better to say that Paul was "called," not "converted", cf. K. Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), pp. 7-23. This may sound like a distinction without a difference. To be sure, Paul did not change deities nor did he change Scriptures. On the other hand, he definitely taught that justification from sin came through the message of the cross (e.g., Ro. 3:21-26) and that his former compatriots, who had not yet accepted the faith of Christ, were not yet saved (Ro. 10:1).

[8] In both these passages, Paul speaks of "what I received." The Greek παραλαμβανω (= to receive) carries the nuance of receiving something by tradition, cf. F. Bruce, *Paul & Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), pp. 41-54.

Missionary Calling

Paul's stunning reversal after his revelation on the Damascus Road was quickly followed by his divine call to be a missionary. Indeed, when Paul later recounted his Damascus Road experience, he said that he was commissioned by Christ to the gentiles "to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God" (Ac. 26:17-18). Apparently only days later, after he briefly returned to Jerusalem, Paul was praying in the temple, and again the Lord said to him, "Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles" (Ac. 22:21). Early on, this calling thrust Paul into publicly preaching among his fellow Jews at Damascus, Jerusalem and Judea the call to repentance and the claim that Jesus was God's Son (Ac. 9:19b-22; 26:20). When he returned to Jerusalem, the Christians were suspicious that his reversal might be a ploy until he was befriended and defended by Barnabas (Ac. 9:26-30). By his own testimony, he also went to Arabia, probably into Nabatea (Ga. 1:15-17), though whether this was before or after his return to Damascus and Jerusalem is unclear.[9] If while in the area of Arabia and Damascus he preached Christ, his message apparently was not well-received by the authorities, for he had to be smuggled over the city wall of Damascus to escape arrest (2 Co. 11:32).

Three years after his conversion, Paul went back to Jerusalem for fifteen days where he met Peter and James (Ga. 1:18-19). He then returned to his home in Tarsus, Cilicia (Ac. 9:30), where he evidently did some early missions work (Ga. 1:21-24). With the encouragement of Barnabas, Paul relocated to Antioch, Syria, where he continued to develop his teaching ministry (Ac. 11:25-26). When it became apparent through a prophetic warning that a severe famine would strike the Mediterranean world during the reign of Claudius Caesar, Paul and Barnabas led a delegation from Antioch with a relief fund to help the Christians there in their distress (Ac. 11:27-30). This trip may be the one referred to by Paul as occurring fourteen years later (Ga. 2:1ff.). If so, then there was a second purpose to the trip. Paul wanted to compare his understanding of the gospel with the leaders of the Jerusalem church to make certain that both he and they were in accord before he set out to continue missionary work among non-Jews (Ga. 2:2-10).[10] It was from Antioch that Paul launched his extensive missionary journeys throughout Asia Minor and Greece (Acts 13-20).

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[9] Scholars suggest that the Arabia of which Paul speaks was the nearby Nabatean kingdom ruled by Aretas IV (9 BC-AD 40), cf. Bruce, *Paul, Apostle of the Heart*, pp. 81-82.

[10] The chronology of Paul's career is not entirely clear at this point. For one thing, concerning the "fourteen years" in Ga. 2:1, it is not certain whether he means fourteen years after his conversion or fourteen years after his previous visit. Of course, later Paul visited Jerusalem again after his first missions tour (Acts 15), so the visit of Ga. 2:1 could also refer to a later time. However, two factors tip the scale in favor of Ga. 2:1 being the earlier visit: the encouragement that Paul would continue to remember the poor (Ga. 2:10), which seems appropriate in light of the relief mission, and the fact that in Galatians 2 Paul seems intent on listing in order every contact he had with the Jerusalem church. If so, then his first contact would have been right after his conversion (Ac. 9:26ff.), and his second visit must have been the relief mission in Galatians 2:1 (Ac. 11:29-30).

Luke, the Theologian

If Paul is the primary figure in the latter half of the Book of Acts, Luke is the biographer. It is important to examine Paul's missionary trips in the larger context of Luke's extended history in the two-volume work, Luke-Acts. It is widely recognized that Luke is both a historian and a theologian, that is to say, his recording of the history of Jesus and the early Christians was imbued with a theological concern that shaped his choice and treatment of events. As such, Luke was not a dispassionate recorder of miscellaneous data, but rather, one who used the narratives of history to explain what God was doing in the world.[11] As such, a number of theological themes are apparent in Luke's two works.

The Christians and the Romans

Luke (or *Loukas*) was not himself Jewish, nor was he writing for a Jewish audience (Lk. 1:3; Ac. 1:1). Scholars have noted that the style of his writing is similar to the genre of ancient literary works that were intended to be published and read by society at large in the Greco-Roman world.[12] Furthermore, Luke seems to take pains to demonstrate that the Christian movement was politically harmless to the Romans. The great fire in Rome in AD 64 had been blamed upon the Christians,[13] and when the Romans perceived that Christianity was not merely another sect of Judaism, Christianity was left without any legal status. Thus, Luke shows that Jesus and his disciples were pronounced innocent by the Roman courts and officials (Lk. 23:4, 13-16, 22, 47; Ac. 19:35-41; 23:25-30; 25:8-21, 24-27; 26:30-32), and especially, the great missionary of the Christian church was himself a Roman citizen (Ac. 16:37-39; 22:26-28). Thus, there is an apologetic motif in Luke's two-volume work.[14]

The Gospel to the Nations

Even more important is Luke's concern to explain how the good news about Jesus moved beyond the closed circle of Jewishness to the non-Jewish nations of the Roman world. Geographically, there is a progression in the third gospel from Galilee to Jerusalem, and in the Acts there is the further progression from Jerusalem to the nations.

In his gospel, Luke begins by using culturally loaded language to describe Jesus as the Benefactor of the world. The word σωτμρ (= Benefactor, Savior) had

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[11] I. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

[12] C. Talbert, Reading Luke: A Literary and Theology Commentary on the Third Gospel (New York: Crossroad, 1988), pp. 7-11.

[13] Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.38-44.

[14] C. Caird, *Saint Luke* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), pp. 13-15.

been used for centuries in the Greek world to describe the kings among the Ptolemies and Seleucids, and when the Romans conquered the Greek world, the same title was used unofficially of the emperors, too.[15] Jesus, as Luke explains it, was the Benefactor of all benefactors (Lk. 1:47; 2:11; 5:31; 13:23), the true Savior. He was the true Prince of Peace (Lk. 2:14; Ac. 10:36), who offered something even greater than the *Pax Romana*.[16] Caesar may have been lord of the empire, but Jesus was the divine Lord of the whole world (Lk. 2:11; Ac. 2:36; 9:5; 22:8; 26:15). Another cultural expression was the formula of "doing (good) in word and deed." In proclamations issued from places as diverse as Athens and Galatia, public figures were extolled because they demonstrated their leadership "in word and deed."[17] Jesus, also, was a man of "word and deed" (Lk. 24:19; Ac. 1:1; 10:38) as was Moses before him (Ac. 7:22).

It is Luke's gospel that records Jesus sending out the seventy disciples two-by-two. The number seventy is significant, since this was the traditional Jewish numbering of the nations of the world based on the table of nations in Genesis 10. This mission during Jesus public ministry anticipates the later mission of the disciples to the whole world.[18] The gospel concludes with Jesus' great commission, that beginning in Jerusalem his story was to be proclaimed to all nations (Lk. 24:46-47). Luke's second volume, the Book of Acts, commences with the same commission, that the good news about Jesus was to be preached in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Ac. 1:8).

The first half of the Book of Acts concentrates on the breaking of Jewish ethnic and regional boundaries so that this vision could be accomplished. The gift of other tongues at Pentecost anticipates this international mission, when Jews of the major provinces of Rome praised God in the various dialects of the nations (Ac. 2:1-11). Nevertheless, the idea that the message of Jesus was for those beyond the Jewish circle was not easy to accept. Traditionally, there was an extremely rigid concern for racial purity among the Jews dating back to the post-exilic period (cf. Ne. 13:23; Mal. 2:10-16). Ethnic barriers were intertwined with religious barriers.[19] The first half of Acts shows how in incremental steps these barriers were crossed, one by one.

As Luke makes clear, at first the Christians were disinterested in reaching

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[15] F. Danker, *Luke [PC]* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), pp. 17.

[16] It is to the point that Luke uses the term "peace" more than all other three gospels combined.

[17] Danker, pp. 11-12.

[18] In fact, the textual variants between "seventy" and "seventy-two" in Lk. 10:1 probably go back to the variation of numbers for the nations listed in the Masoretic Text (seventy) and the Septuagint (seventy-two) in Genesis 10. Whichever number is in the original text of Lk. 10:1, the number of disciples carry the same symbolic significance.

[19] For a fuller discussion of the Jewish concern to maintain racial purity, see J. Jeremias, *Jereusalem in the Time of Jesus* , trans. F. H. and C. H. Cave (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), pp. 269-358.

beyond the Jewish boundaries, and in fact, they seemed to have little vision for reaching beyond the environs of Jerusalem itself. However, with the lynching of Stephen (Ac. 6:8-14; 7:54-60) and the scattering of the Jerusalem Christians due to persecution (Ac. 8:1-3), the first major geographical barrier was breached. The scattering believers preached the word about Jesus everywhere they went (Ac. 8:4). At first the message they preached was shared only with other Jews (Ac. 11:19). One of the first excursions beyond this ethnic solidarity was made by Philip, who shared the message with some Samaritans (Ac. 8:5ff.). His boldness merited an investigative delegation from the Jerusalem church, who sent Peter and John northward to see what was happening (Ac. 8:14). The gift of the Spirit to the Samaritans was the clinching evidence that heralded an end to the old division between Jew and Samaritan (Ac. 8:15-17). On the way southward, Peter and John preached the message of Jesus in many other Samaritan villages (Ac. 8:25). Philip, for his part, next shared the gospel with an Ethiopian proselyte who had been to Jerusalem (Ac. 8:26-39).

The Samaritan ethnic barrier was one thing, but the Gentile ethnic barrier was quite another! Two events in different cities combined to open the way for the Christian message to be preached to the nations. The first event occurred in the coastal fortress of Caesarea, where Peter shared the message of Jesus with a Gentile military officer (Ac. 10). Though at first Peter was terribly reluctant, God broke down his reserve in a vision about kosher food (Ac. 10:9-16). When Peter obeyed by preaching to these Gentiles the story of Jesus, God confirmed his acceptance of the Gentiles by filling the entire household of listeners with the Holy Spirit (Ac. 10:44-48). Though Peter was cross-examined by his colleagues in Jerusalem over the incident (Ac. 11:1-17), the conclusion was unanimous: God “has even granted the Gentiles repentance unto life” (Ac. 11:18)!

The second event occurred much farther north at Antioch, Syria. Here, some of the fleeing Christians preached the message of Jesus to Greeks, and many of them accepted the gospel (Ac. 11:20-21). As before, the Jerusalem church sent a representative to investigate, this time Barnabas, but he observed that, once again, this was from the hand of God (Ac. 11:22-24). The relief mission of Saul and Barnabas from the interracial church at Antioch to the believers in Jerusalem must have helped solidify the conclusion that the Gentiles were candidates for the message of Jesus (Ac. 11:27-30). After Paul and Barnabas delivered the gifts from their brothers and sisters to the north, they returned from Jerusalem to Antioch, bringing with them John Mark of the Jerusalem church (Ac. 12:25).

The First Great Tour (13-14)

Paul’s great missionary outreach to the Gentile world began from Antioch. To

be sure, other Christians besides Paul apparently shared the message of Jesus in the Greco-Roman world. When Paul wrote to the Romans, for instance, he wrote to a congregation that was begun by someone else (Ro. 1:10). Our earliest reference to Christians in Rome comes during the reign of Claudius Caesar (AD 41-54), when he expelled the Jews from the city in AD 49 over rioting connected with the "instigation of Chrestus".[20] Most scholars agree that Chrestus is a misspelling of Christus, the Latin title for Christ, and the riots probably were Jewish demonstrations against the Christian claim that Jesus of Nazareth was the Jewish Messiah.[21] Still, it was Paul who spearheaded the most intensive and extensive thrust into the non-Jewish world.

The church at Antioch, where earlier Christian missionaries first began to explain the message of Jesus to Greeks (11:19-20), was a multi-racial, multi-ethnic congregation. It's leaders were Barnabas, a Levite from Cyprus (cf. 4:36), Simeon "the Black," probably an African,[22] Lucius of Cyrene, possibly either a Hellenistic Jew or an African proselyte, Manaen, a Palestinian aristocrat, and Saul, the Christian Pharisee (13:1).[23] It is obvious from the diversity of leaders that the Antioch fellowship was successful in breaking down the ancient cultural and ethnic barriers that separated the different social strata.[24] Luke calls the five men "prophets and teachers", designations for two of the leadership gifts to the church (cf. Ep. 4:11; 1 Co. 12:28; 14:6). Prophets were those inspired by the Holy Spirit to offer messages of strength, encouragement and comfort to the church (1 Co. 14:3). Their ministry can be seen in several types of inspired utterances, including preaching (1 Co. 11:4; Rv. 11:3) and prediction (Ac. 11:27-28; 21:10-11). Teachers, on the other hand, were leaders who excelled at exposition, especially with regard to Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures (cf. Col. 1:28; 1 Ti. 1:3-11; 4:13; 2 Ti. 1:13-14; 3:16). Paul, especially, understood his calling to be that of an apostle and teacher (1 Ti. 2:7; 2 Ti. 1:11).[25] During a period of worship and fasting, the Holy Spirit gave direction for Barnabas and Saul to begin the work of evangelizing the Gentiles (Ac. 13:2). It is difficult to know exactly how to understand the expression, "The Holy Spirit said..." It may mean that a Spirit-inspired utterance was offered by one of the other leaders (cf. Ac. 20:23; 21:11),[26] or it may mean that the Spirit spoke directly to

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[20] Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, 25.4.

[21] M. Harris, *3 Crucial Questions about Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), pp. 21-24.

[22] **Νιγερ** is a Latin loanword meaning "dark-complexioned", cf. *BAG* (1979), p. 539.

[23] Bruce, Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free, pp. 148-150.

[24] M. Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), p. 180-181.

[25] The Greek text in Ac. 13:1 twice contains the untranslatable particle τε, one connecting Barnabas, Simeon and Lucius and the other connecting Manaen and Saul, which in turn suggests that the first three were prophets and the latter two were teachers, cf. R. Longenecker, *EBC* (1981) 9.416.

[26] Early in the Book of Acts, for instance, Jesus' post-resurrection instructions to the disciples were said to have been given "through the Spirit" (Ac. 1:2). Similarly, the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament spoke through David (Ac.

Barnabas and Saul (cf. Ac. 8:29; 10:19; 11:12). In any case, the two were commissioned with fasting, prayer and the laying on of hands (13:3).

ANTIOCH, SYRIA

Antioch, on the Orontes River, was excavated by Princeton University between 1932-39. From the time of the successors of Alexander, the city grew rapidly, and after the Romans annexed Syria, the city's great road was flanked by broad walkways and a colonnade. It became the third largest city of the empire, enjoyed its own Olympic style games, had a large Jewish population and a reputation for immorality. As a commercial center, it held trade connections throughout the world. Geographically, it was the meeting place between the Hellenistic and Oriental civilizations. Religiously, it included adherents to the traditional Greco-Roman pantheons as well as to the Syrian worship of Baal and the Mother Goddess. The mystery religions, with their ideas of death, regeneration and the afterlife, also were part of the religious mix. The city was generally affluent and characterized by religious inquiry.

The Chalice of Antioch, a piece of Christian art reputedly recovered from Antioch in 1910, has been accepted by some as the cup used by Jesus at the last supper. However, most experts date the cup to about the 4th or 5th century AD.

***The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East* and other sources**

On the Island of Cyprus

The order of names, Barnabas and Saul, may be of significance in the early missions narratives (13:2, 7; 14:14), indicating that the leader, at first, was Barnabas. This distinction also is evident later, when Barnabas was confused with Zeus, the father of the Greek pantheon, while Paul was dubbed Hermes, the messenger of the gods (cf. 14:12). This order would change shortly, however, and the more frequent references list Paul first. The missionaries also took with them John Mark, Barnabas' cousin (cf. Col. 4:10), who had accompanied them from Jerusalem (Ac. 12:25).

The first leg of their trip brought them from the seaport of Seleucia to the Island of Cyprus, where they landed at Salamis, a Greek settlement on the coast and the most important city on the island. Like many Greek cities, it had a sizeable Jewish population, and Barnabas and Paul began their preaching in the synagogues (13:4-5), though Luke does not record any immediate response. Many years later, Christian tradition says that Barnabas was martyred at Salamis in AD 61.

Paul's habit of approaching each new city by first preaching in the local synagogue had a theological base in that the gospel was "first for the Jew, then for

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1:16; 4:25; cf. 28:25).

the Gentile" (Ro. 1:16). This priority assumes what is explicit elsewhere, that is, that as Jesus said, "Salvation is from the Jews" (Jn. 4:22) and the promise was to them first (Ac. 2:39). Also, many God-fearers, those who had not yet become Jewish proselytes but were attracted to the Jewish view of God, were attached to the synagogues, and thus, they became a natural bridge into the Gentile world.[27]

From Salamis, Barnabas and Paul traveled overland toward the west until they arrived at Paphos on the west coast. There, they were confronted by a "sorcerer and false prophet", Elymas, the son of Jesus (13:6), who had attached himself to the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. Though not as large as Salamis, Paphos was the administrative seat of the area and the traditional center for the cult of Aphrodite, the foam-born goddess of love who arose from the sea.[28] The proconsul, no doubt, wanted to be sure that the visitors were not a threat to the peace of his domain. His summons turned into a confrontation with Elymas on the one side and Paul and Barnabas on the other (13:7-8). Vexed with this opposition, Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to rebuke Elymas, and he pronounced a judgment of temporary blindness upon him (13:9-11), causing the Roman official to become a believer (13:12). This, then, was the first provincial ruler to accept Christianity, and Cyprus was the first territory to have a Christian governor.

The simple statement in 13:12, "He believed," uses the most common verb with which Luke describes the acceptance of the Christian faith (cf. Ac. 4:4; 5:14; 8:12; 9:42, 10:43; 11:21; 13:39, 48; 14:1; 15:7; 16:15, 31, 34; 17:12, 34; 18:27; 19:18; 21:20). While there are other similar expressions, such as, "became obedient to the faith" (Ac. 6:7), "turned to the Lord" (Ac. 9:35; 11:21), "honored the word of the Lord" (Ac. 13:48), "put their trust in the Lord" (14:23), "were persuaded" (Ac. 17:4) and "were convinced" (Ac. 28:24), the critical element in all these descriptions is faith in Christ.

In Pisidian Antioch

From Paphos, Paul and the others sailed for the mainland, landing at the port of Perga, Pamphylia, where John Mark left them to return to Jerusalem (13:13). Three points merit discussion here. First, Paul is now clearly the leader, since Luke refers to the group as "Paul and his companions". Second, John Mark's decision to return to Jerusalem is surprising, since if it was his intent to do so all along, he would have done better to have turned back while still at Paphos instead of sailing a

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[27] God-fearers, described in Acts as *phoboumenoi* (= those fearing) and *sebomenoi ton theon* (= those reverencing God), were Jewish sympathizers or "semi-Jews." Literary and epigraphic evidence for this group is extensive archaeologically, cf. L. Feldman, "The Omnipresence of the God-Fearers," *BAR* (Sep-Oct 1986), pp. 58-63.

[28] F. Maier, "Paphos," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East* (New York: Oxford University, 1997), 4.245-246.

ANTIOCH, PISIDIA

That there were two cities with the same name, one in Syria and the other in Pisidia, is owed to the early days of the Hellenistic Empire after Alexander's death. Seleucus I Nicator (312-281 BC) established the former, naming it after his father, Antiochus, and the latter was built by either Seleucus or his son, Antiochus I Soter. By the time of Paul, Antioch, Pisidia had become the governing and military seat for the southern half of a large area known as Galatia, and during Paul's visit, this region was undergoing Roman "pacification," the completion of conquest and organization under Roman rule. Claudius Caesar was especially intent on progress in this regard. The city of Antioch lay near the Pisidian border on the Phrygian side.

The city had a marked ethnic diversity, including Jews, Greek colonists and native Phrygians. After its possession by Rome in 25 BC, it was declared a Roman Colony, which provided it with a very high status. Religious diversity, also, marked the city. The traditional patron god was Men (by the Greeks, he was identified with either Dionysos, Apollo or Asklepios). There was a Jewish synagogue as well.

Sir William Ramsey, *The Cities of St. Paul*

considerable distance in the opposite direction of Jerusalem before deciding to go home. Whether John Mark was smitten with a sudden case of homesickness, had tired of the rigors of travel, was dissatisfied with Paul as the new leader, disagreed with Paul's intent to bypass Perga and press inland toward Antioch, Pisidia, or had reservations about a direct advance into unfamiliar Gentile territory is unclear.[29] What is clear is that later Paul refused to admit John Mark on another such missionary endeavor (Ac. 15:37-39), and the language of "desertion" is sharp.[30] Finally, why the group decided to bypass Perga is not clear, either, since it was a major Greek city. If Pisidian Antioch is to be included in the churches to whom Paul would later address the Galatian letter,[31] then his admission that he first preached in Galatia due to an illness may bear upon the question (Ga. 4:13). Sir William Ramsey speculated that perhaps Paul contracted malaria and needed to escape the lowlands around Perga.

As was their custom, the missionaries first began with the synagogue. The typical liturgy for a first century synagogue service would have included the opening call to "Bless the Lord" followed by the recitation of the *Shema*, the Eighteen Benedictions, a reading from the Torah, a reading from the Prophets, a sermon and a benediction. Synagogue rulers presided over the services and designated persons to

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[29] Longenecker, 421.

[30] The verb αφιστημι (= to revolt, desert) suggests more than just personal dissatisfaction.

[31] The debate between the "North Galatian Theory" and the "South Galatian Theory" has received considerable attention (see the biblical introductions). However, the case for Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe as the Galatian churches of the Galatian letter has much to recommend it, cf. F. Bruce, "Galatian Problems (2): North or South Galatians?," *BJRL*, 52 (1969-70), pp. 243-266.

fulfill the various functions.[32] It is this authority that enabled them to permit the visitors to speak after the readings, and in effect, to invite them to give the sermon (13:14-15).

In Acts, Luke offers two lengthy abstracts of Paul's missionary sermons (Ac. 13, 17), and the longest one is here. His address included both Jews and God-fearers (13:16, 26). Though Luke does not specify the Torah and Prophets readings, it may well be that Paul made connections with them in his sermon, which would have been typical. In any case, he began with a historical recitation from the Egyptian exodus and conquest of Canaan (13:17-20a) to the period of the judges and the early monarchy (13:20b-22). Such a recital amounted virtually to a confession of faith concerning God's choice of the patriarchs and the nation of Israel, his gift to them of the land of Canaan, and the rise of the monarchy epitomized under David, Israel's greatest king. This national liturgy, which one also finds in Psalms 78, 105 and 106, was the Old Testament preface to the New Testament message.[33]

When Paul came to David, it was the natural entry into the genealogy of Jesus (13:23). From David's line, God brought Jesus the Savior. The promise of a son of David who would come to deliver Israel was well-known among the Jews (Is. 11:1ff.; Je. 30:9; 33:15; Eze. 34:23; 37:24; Ho. 3:5),[34] and the title "Savior" was especially apropos because of its significance in both Jewish and non-Jewish circles. For Jews, it recalled the striking theme in Isaiah that God would become the Savior of his people (Is. 19:20; 43:3, 11; 45:15, 21; 49:26; 60:16; 62:11; 63:8). For non-Jews, it carried the idea of the divine Benefactor of the world, a title usually applied to the Caesars. Paul explained the ministry of John the Baptist (13:24-25), one of whom the Jews in Pisidia may well have known if they were like Jews in other places (cf. Ac. 18:24-25; 19:3).

The climax of the sermon was aimed directly at convincing Paul's listeners (13:26). Jesus had not been recognized by the people of Israel as the one sent by God, and the rulers in Jerusalem condemned him to death. His execution was a fulfillment of the Hebrew prophets (13:27-29).[35] After his entombment, God raised Jesus from the dead, and for a period of time he was seen alive by his disciples (13:30-31). What God had promised long ago he had now fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus (13:32-35). Jesus is the hope of Israel anticipated in the coronation acclamations of David's dynasty (Ps. 2:7; Is. 55:3; Ps. 16:10). David, who died and decayed, was the

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[32] E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 456-462.

[33] F. Bruce, *New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), pp. 36-37.

[34] Besides the literature of the Hebrew Bible, other Jewish writings, also, looked for the coming of a deliverer from David's line (cf. Psalms of Solomon 17:21ff.; 4 Ezra 12:31-34).

[35] Luke does not offer any substantiating passages, but very likely Paul had in mind such references as Ps. 22; Is. 53 and Zec. 11.

antithesis of his descendant, Jesus, who was raised from the dead without decay (13:36-37). The forgiveness of sins envisioned by various of the prophets (cf. Is. 33:24; Je. 31:34; 33:8; 50:20; Zec. 12:13) was now available by faith in Jesus (13:38-39). Paul closed with a warning drawn from Habakkuk's oracle just before Jerusalem's fall to the Babylonians in the 6th century BC (13:40-41; Hab. 1:5-6). The message of Jesus, if it was truly the fulfillment of God's promises, was not something that could be ignored!

THE APOSTOLIC PREACHING

Paul's handling of the Christian message parallels at several critical points Peter's preaching. The essential elements of the Christian *kerygma* (proclamation) can be summarized in four broad points:

1. The prophecies are fulfilled (Ac. 2:16-21; 3:13a; 10:43; 13:16-25)
2. God has acted decisively in the death and resurrection of Jesus (Ac. 2:22-24; 3:13b-15a; 10:37-38, 40a; 13:26-30)
3. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus are attested by the Scriptures and by eyewitnesses (Ac. 2:25-32; 3:15b, 17-18, 22-26; 10:39-41; 13:31-37)
4. Jesus has been exalted as Lord over all, and the appropriate response is to repent and believe the good news (Ac. 2:33-40; 3:19-23, 26; 10:36, 42-43; 13:38-41)

C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments*

Paul's sermon garnered intense interest, and he was quickly invited to expound further on the next sabbath (13:42). Sincere Jews and proselytes to Judaism were disposed to accept the new message, and Paul and Barnabas encouraged them to continue in this vein (13:43). By the next week, the word was out: this was to be a synagogue service worth attending, and people came from everywhere! The crowd was not just Jewish, either. When the synagogue members saw the large crowd of outsiders, they were annoyed and debated with Paul (13:44-45). Paul, however, was not the least intimidated. In keeping with his basic approach, he reaffirmed that the message must go first to the Jews (cf. Ro. 1:16b). A Jewish rejection of the message, however, was an open door for preaching to the non-Jews (cf. Ro. 11:11-16), and Paul buttressed his claim by appealing to the servant passages in Isaiah (13:46-47; cf. Is. 49:6). The non-Jewish listeners were delighted, and many of them immediately accepted the message of Jesus (13:48-49). Many synagogue members, however, were incensed and gained the influence of the civic leaders against Paul through the leaders' wives (13:50a). The missionaries were expelled from the city, and as Jesus had instructed, they "shook the dust from their feet" as they left (13:50b-51; cf. Mt.

10:14//Mk. 6:11//Lk. 9:5). The new believers in Antioch, for their part, remained constant in their new faith (13:52).

In Iconium

From Antioch, Pisidia, Paul and his company turned eastward and slightly south about 90 miles to Iconium, a city on a level plateau some 3,370' above sea level and sheltered on the west by high mountains. The city prided itself on its ancient origins, and according to local tradition, it had existed both before and after a great flood in which all humans perished.[36]

ICONIUM,LYCAONIA

Iconium lies near the border of the districts of Lycaonia and Phrygia, and thus is associated with both regions. The native worship was dominated by the Phrygian goddess Cybele, the mother-fertility deity who drove her consort to emasculation by killing his lover-nymph, Sangaritis. Hence, castration was required for all priests of Cybele. The religion gained official acceptance during the reign of Claudius, probably near the time Paul preached in Iconium. Also, the city had been honored for its loyalty to Rome in about AD 41 by receiving an imperial name, Claudiconium.

Iconium, like Pisidian Antioch, was in the province of southern Galatia. Its population was mixed, including native Anatolians, Greeks and Jews. The Christian church that began there endured long after Paul, and in the late 2nd century, a story was composed about Thecla, a young woman of Iconium who heard Paul preach. She was converted, renounced marriage, and became a preacher herself, eventually dying as a martyr (*The Acts of Paul and Thecla*).

Sir William Ramsey, *The Cities of St. Paul*

The exact route from Pisidian Antioch to Iconium, though debated, was arduous in any case. If Paul went by way of the Roman road to Neapolis and then across on the Imperial Road built by Augustus between Antioch and Lystra, as stated in *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, it was about a 27 hour walk (assuming a pace of about 3 miles per hour).[37] The evangelistic efforts at Iconium began, as usual, in the synagogue (14:1). Both Jews and non-Jews accepted the message and became the nucleus of a Christian community. As before, there was Jewish opposition, since the new message competed directly with the synagogue traditions and membership. In

[36] The Iconium flood story bears several similarities as well as marked differences to the Genesis flood story (Ge. 6-9), but in any case, the Iconiums believed their land was repopulated immediately after the great flood of antiquity, cf. W. Ramsey, *The Cities of St. Paul* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), pp. 319-322.

[37] W. Ramsey, *The Church in the Roman Empire* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), pp. 27-36.

Iconium, however, the opposition could not mobilize as quickly as it had in Pisidian Antioch. In Antioch, which was ruled by an oligarchy of Roman colonists, the missionaries had been ousted quickly when an appeal was made to the men and women of high rank. In Iconium, which was a Hellenic city with a more democratic government, the process was slower and required a gradual working on the masses. Hence, Paul and Barnabas were able, in spite of the opposition, to stay on for a longer time, and their ministry was accompanied by miraculous signs (14:2-3).[38] Eventually, the divided opinion in the city became so volatile, with the possibility of a lynching, that the missionaries were compelled to leave. They set out for nearby Lystra and Derbe (14:4-7).

In Lystra and Derbe

Like Antioch and Iconium, Lystra and Derbe were part of the most southern area in the province of Galatia, and Lystra lay at the southern terminus of the Imperial Road from Antioch. Both Lystra and Derbe were more Romanised than Antioch and Iconium. Lystra had status as a Roman colony, and hence, Paul's Roman citizenship afforded some immediate protection. When Paul was instrumental in the healing of a local man who had been congenitally crippled (14:8-10), the Lycaonians began to acclaim Barnabas as Zeus (father of the Greek pantheon) and Paul as Hermes (messenger of the gods).[39] Both the healing and the walking of the man were astounding miracles. Since the fervent shouting of the pagan Lycaonians was in their own tongue (14:11-12, which presumably none in Paul's company recognized, it was not until the priest of Zeus began preparations for sacrifice that the missionaries realized what was happening (14:13). The temple of Zeus was hard by the city gates where they were taken,[40] and when Paul saw what was on the verge of taking place, he rushed out to disclaim the misperception.

Paul's speech was the first recorded sermon to pure pagans. Previously, his encounters with non-Jews had been from within the wing of the Jewish community, to God-fearers who already were attached to the synagogue. Luke's precis of Paul's sermon at Lystsra shows his efforts to convince them that the missionaries were bearers of a gospel that was diametrically opposed to pagan religion (14:14-18). In one sense, this sermon serves an example of "pre-evangelism," since no distinctively Christian element appears. Rather, Paul sought to turn his listeners to the God of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Creator and sustainer of life. The story of Jesus presumably would be told later.

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[38] Ramsey, *Cities of St. Paul*, pp. 371-374.

[39] The older English translations offered the Roman names, Jupiter and Mercury, which correspond to Zeus and Hermes.

[40] D. Hagner, *ISBE* (1986) III.193.

When traveling Jews from Antioch and Iconium arrived and recognized Paul, they incited the crowds to riot. Paul was stoned and thrown out of the city for dead (14:19). He revived, however, and the next day he and his companions left for Derbe (14:20). Later, Paul would reflect on his stoning at Lystra (2 Co. 11:25), and there has been speculation that his language about the man who was "caught up to Paradise" may well have been his own near-death experience there (2 Co. 12:2-4).[41]

In Derbe, more disciples were won, after which the missionaries retraced their steps to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, where they sought to encourage the new believers in their faith (14:21). Hardship and persecution were to be expected (14:22), and later, Paul would say that he bore in his own body the stigmata of Jesus (Ga. 6:17), something the Galatian Christians knew well due to his experience in Lystra. In each of the cities, the missionaries established leaders to oversee the congregations (14:23). The use of the Greek word χειροτονεω (= to choose, to elect by raising hands) raises the question as to whether the congregational leaders were simply appointed by the apostles or voted on by the congregations. The fact that Paul and Barnabas are the subjects of the verb favors the former,[42] though it is not unlikely that congregational assent was also involved (cf. 6:2ff.; 13:2-3).

The title πρεσβυτεροι (= elders, presbyters) had been used earlier to describe the leaders in the Jerusalem church (cf. 11:30), and it also was a standard title in the synagogue and was used variously in Jewish circles to refer to a wide range of religious and civic leaders.[43] At this early period, the title should not be imbued with the post-apostolic connotations that developed half a century and more later.

To conclude this first missions trip, the missionaries passed back through Pisidia to the coastal lowlands of Pamphylia (14:24). They preached at Perga, the city where John Mark had left them to return to Jerusalem (14:25; cf. 13:13), and made it to Attalia, the port city for Perga (14:26). From there, it was a sea voyage to their base in Syrian Antioch, where they met with the church to report on their travels. Especially important was their rehearsal of how their missionary work had progressed among non-Jewish peoples (14:27). Antioch, Syria was now a mother church to several fledging congregations in Asia Minor. The first missions expedition was a success!

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[41] However, since the vision took place fourteen years before the writing of 2 Corinthians, which is usually placed in about the mid-50s, the incident in Lystra may not fit the chronology, since Paul was probably on his first missions tour in the mid to late 40s.

[42] *BAG* (1979) 881.

[43] *TDNT* (1968) VI.660.

The Galatian Letter

There is some debate regarding which is the earliest of Paul's letters, but the letter to the Galatians has a strong claim. The dating of the letter depends upon how one understands "Galatia" (Ga. 1:1-2), which in turn rests upon two possibilities from the Roman Period. First, Galatia can be taken in an ethnic sense to refer to the Celtic immigrants who settled in north-central Asia Minor. Second, Galatia can be taken in a provincial sense to refer to the Roman reorganization that extended the Galatian boundaries southward toward the Mediterranean. If the latter, Galatia would include the cities of Paul's first missions tour: Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. On the other hand, if Galatia is taken in an ethnic sense, then the Galatian letter is not Paul's earliest, since he is not specifically said to have visited Galatia until at least his second missions tour (cf. 16:6), and he revisited it at the beginning of his third tour (cf. 18:23). In both these passages, however, it is unclear whether Paul refers to the region in the older ethnic sense or the newer provincial sense.

A strong case can be made that Paul uses the term in the Roman provincial sense, and hence, the Galatian churches were the ones he established on his first missions tour. Most scholars now follow this view. Otherwise, since the Galatian letter addresses the problem of Judaizers and their demand for circumcision, why did Paul not appeal to the decisions and the encyclical of the Jerusalem council (Ac. 15:22-29)? If the south Galatian theory is correct, Paul may have written the Galatian letter prior to the council in Jerusalem, perhaps as early as AD 49.[44]

The "First" Ecumenical Council (15:1-35)

The language of "ecumenical councils" comes from church history later than the 1st century. In the early centuries of Christianity, several councils were deemed "ecumenical" (from the Greek **οικουμενη** = the inhabited world), since they involved church leaders from both the East and the West representing the whole of Christendom. Such meetings generally involved the refutation of heresy and/or the setting forth of Christian orthodoxy. The first four of these councils were **Nicaea** (AD 325), which addressed the nature of Christ as God, **Constantinople** (AD 381), which condemned tritheism and those who said the Holy Spirit was created, **Ephesus** (AD 431), which addressed the Virgin Mary as the *Theotokos* (mother of God), and **Chalcedon** (AD 451), which addressed the nature of Christ as both human and divine.[45]

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[44] For more detail on this problem, see D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1970), pp. 450-465; F. Bruce, "Galatian Problems (2): North or South Galatians?", *BJRL*, 52 (1969-70), pp. 243-266.

[45] C. Blaising, "Constantinople, Council of" and "Nicaea, Council of," J. Hall, "Church Councils" and "Chalcedon, Council of," D. Rausch, "Ecumenical Councils," V. Walter, "Ephesus, Council of," *EDT* (1984) 357-358.

The council in Jerusalem in about AD 49, which is described in Acts 15, set the precedent for later councils. The conclusions of this council were normative for the entire Christian church. Of course, this council was unique in that it had apostolic leadership, while the later councils did not.

The Issue

The spread of the gospel among non-Jewish peoples is the background for this council. Peter had broken the traditional ethnic lines by his sermon to the Gentile God-fearer, Cornelius (Ac. 10). The Antioch church in Syria had broken similar ethnic boundaries by preaching the message of Jesus to Greeks (Ac. 11:20-21). Now, the Antioch church had taken the initiative to launch a Gentile mission to Cyprus and southern Galatia, during which Paul and his companions preached to outright pagans. New Christian communities of mixed Jewish and Gentile populations were growing in several Greco-Roman cities.

The issue came to a head when some Jewish Christians from Judea visited the church at Antioch, Syria and taught that circumcision was necessary for salvation (15:1). It is important to observe that the issue was not whether circumcision was permissible, but whether it was mandatory. It was not whether Jews should give up their Jewishness, but whether Gentiles had to become Jews in order to be saved. Their demand for circumcision, no doubt, stemmed from the ancient commands of the Torah given to Abraham (Ge. 17:10-14) and reaffirmed by Moses for both native Israelites and aliens living among them (Ex. 12:48-49). Circumcision was the ritual setting apart of all males for covenant loyalty. Failure to perform the ritual meant breaking covenant and being ostracized from the community. That this ritual was for non-Jews who accepted the Jewish faith was clearly expressed by Ezekiel (Eze. 44:9). In short, the demand of these Judeans was that it was necessary to become a Jewish proselyte before one could become a Christian.

Their teaching immediately called into question the legitimacy of the missionary tour by Paul and Barnabas, where many non-Jews had accepted the Christian message without submitting to circumcision. The missionaries sharply disputed the demand for circumcision (15:2a). While we do not know the way each side supported their respective arguments, it is not unlikely that Paul and Barnabas appealed to passages in both the Torah and the Prophets that indicated God's ideal

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Gradually, with the rise of the Roman papacy, the Roman Church claimed the right of the pope to call all ecumenical councils, a claim that is refuted both by Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism. Vatican II reaffirmed this claim, stating, "A council is never ecumenical unless it is confirmed or at least accepted as such by the successor of Peter." Christians from all three branches of Christianity accept the earlier ecumenical councils. Later councils, especially those after the East-West split of the church in AD 1054, are obviously more controversial because of the disputed Roman Catholic claim to authority. The Papal claim to absolute authority to call church councils was attacked directly by Martin Luther in his *Address to the Christian Nobility*, AD 1520.

was spiritual rather than physical circumcision (e.g., Dt. 10:16; Je. 4:4; 9:25). Certainly any appeal to Scriptural authority was necessarily confined to the Hebrew Bible. The contention was sharp enough that it merited an appeal to a higher authority, and this authority was the group of apostles and elders in Jerusalem who had been with Jesus (15:2b). It is apparent that such an appeal to the apostles constituted an authority equal to and alongside the ancient Scriptures. Paul, Barnabas and a few others were appointed to represent the Antioch church. On the road south to Jerusalem, they passed through various Christian communities that had sprung up, and in each they related their experiences on the first missions tour (15:3-4).

The Presentation of Cases

Each side presented their respective cases. The circumcision group, like Paul (cf. Ac. 23:6), belonged to the Jewish sect of the Pharisees. In accord with their name, which meant "separatist," the Christian Pharisees presumably maintained the traditional attitudes of scrupulous piety and the preservation of the ancient laws, especially ritual purity.[46] No law was more relevant than the circumcision law, since it formally bound the participant to observe all the 613 statutes of the Torah. Hence, they argued, it was necessary for the Gentiles to be circumcised and required to observe the Torah (15:5). After all, had not God given the Torah? Was not the Torah the revelation of the divine will? Did not God's judgment fall on Israel in the past precisely because the nation broke covenant and did not keep the Torah? Torah observance was absolutely critical as the indelible mark of the people of God. It was "*the* means of marking Israel out from her pagan neighbors."[47]

The circumcision case was formidable, and there was animated discussion over it among the apostles and elders of the Jerusalem church (15:6-7a). Three different voices combined to tilt the decision in favor of Paul and Barnabas. The first of these was Peter, who recounted, once again, what had happened at the household of the soldier Cornelius. Peter's leadership in crossing the Gentile ethnic barrier was clear (15:7), and it may well be that his influence was directly related to Jesus' well-known announcement to Peter that he was the one to whom had been given the keys to the kingdom (cf. Mt. 16:17-19). In the Cornelius event, the definitive response to the message of Jesus was faith, and God demonstrated his acceptance of these Gentiles on this basis in that he gave to them the gift of the Holy Spirit with the same sign of other tongues that had been given to the apostles at Pentecost (15:8-9; cf. 2:1-4; 10:44-47; 11:15-18). As a God-fearer, Cornelius had not submitted to circumcision. Salvation, then, was by faith alone! The Christian message could not

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[46]N. Wright, pp. 189-197.

[47] N. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), p. 385.

be salvation by faith plus circumcision plus Torah conformity! Such a position was an impossible yoke-the yoke of the Torah-that, in fact, had not produced salvation for even the people of Israel.[48] Israel's attempt to be saved by Torah observance was futile, and God showed that salvation, whether for the Jew or the non-Jew, was the gracious gift of God, not a reward for Torah intensification (15:11).

Peter's speech was followed by Paul's and Barnabas' report on the missions tour (15:12). Not only had the pagans accepted the message of Jesus, God had supernaturally confirmed the legitimacy of the mission by miracles. How much Paul was able to argue his case further is unknown. Luke is content to simply record Paul's missions tour review. However, one can get a very complete idea about how Paul would go about arguing his case from his Galatian letter. Circumcision, when unmasked, was an attempt to please men, not God (Ga. 1:10; 6:12). The circumcision faction was doing nothing more than attempting to infiltrate the Christian ranks to impose religious slavery on the Gentiles (Ga. 2:4-5; 5:1). Those who rely on the law for salvation implicitly accept the curse of the law for disobedience, and no one obeys perfectly (Ga. 3:10; 5:2-4; 6:13). To rely on circumcision for salvation is a rejection of Christ and the work of the cross (Ga. 2:20-21; 3:13; 5:6, 11; 6:14-15). Perhaps Paul expressed himself on these points, but whether he was able to do so or not, certainly this was the theology that drove his contention.

After the review of the missions tour, James gave a closing address.[49] He added his support to both Peter and Paul with a citation from the prophet Amos, in which David's royal family would be revived so that people, especially the Gentiles, might come to God (15:13-18; cf. Amos 9:11-12). The quotation offered by James from the Septuagint clearly indicated that a Gentile mission had been part of God's purpose from ancient times. Without doubt, James considered the restoration of the royal dynasty of David-David's "fallen tent"-to have been accomplished in Jesus, the royal descendent of David. The whole human race was now privileged to seek salvation in the Lord![50] The upshot of James' exegesis was that the Gentiles should be allowed to accept the message of Jesus without requiring of them the full range of Jewish

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[48] The expression "the yoke of the Torah" was common in rabbinic literature, cf. *Pirke Aboth* 3.6; H. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud and Midrasch* (1922-61) I.608-610.

[49] This person was doubtless the one called "James, the Lord's brother" (Ga. 1:19). He already had become a prominent leader in the Jerusalem church some time earlier (cf. Ac. 12:17). He, along with Peter and John, seems to have been the most prominent leader among the apostles (cf. Ga. 2:9).

[50] The LXX rendering assumes a different pointing of the Hebrew consonants than the traditional Masoretic Text. Whereas the MT אדום(= Edom), the LXX ἄνθρωποι (= humankind), and this reading is confirmed in the Dead Sea Scrolls (4QFlorilegium 1.12); whereas the MT has יִירְשׁוּ (= to possess) the LXX has ἐκζητήσωσιν (= to inquire). Hence, the English translation of James' quotation in Acts will appear somewhat different than the English translation of the passage in Amos. The LXX translation indicates that the nations will seek the God of Israel for salvation after the restoration of the royal house of David, and this, of course, is James' point, cf. F. Bruce, *Peter, Stephen, James & John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 93-97.

legalism, especially circumcision (15:19). An encyclical letter was in order to advise the Gentile Christians to refrain from the practices most objectionable to their Jewish counterparts: food dedicated to pagan deities,[51] incestuous marriage deviation (Lv. 18),[52] the meat of strangled animals (Lv. 17:13-14; Ge. 9:4), and the eating of blood (Lv. 17:10-12).[53] All of these practices, common enough in pagan cultures, were in severe conflict with Jewish practices, and since Jewish and Gentile Christians would be living side-by-side in the same communities, it would show deference on the part of the Gentile Christians to be sensitive to the scruples of their Jewish brothers and sisters (15:20). Later, Paul would address some of these same issues out of the context of Christian freedom, but even though he endorses Christian freedom, he also continues to advise sensitivity to the scruples of others (cf. 1 Co. 8:1-13; 10:23-33; Ro. 14).

James concluded by reminding the group that the Torah was widely available to all, since it was the fundamental text in the synagogue, so these concessions to Jewish scruples would be well known (15:21). Such sensitivity would make it possible for Jewish and Gentile Christians to have fellowship. It meant that while Gentiles did not have to become Jews in order to become Christians, it also meant that Jews did not have to give up their Jewishness in order to be Christian, either.

The Encyclical Letter

The letter that James recommended was duly composed, along with a delegation to deliver it (15:22).[54] The delegation, made up of Judas and Silas as

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[51] In most Greco-Roman cities, meat in the open markets had been offered previously as a sacrifice to the local pagan deities. Furthermore, banquets were often held on temple grounds in honor of the god(s) to whom the meat had been dedicated. The common belief was that the god himself was a guest, and from the meat dedicated to him, he entered into the bodies and spirits of those who ate, cf. W. Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), pp. 91-92. Jews, of course, would naturally see this practice as a capitulation to Gentile polytheism.

[52] It has long been noted that the prohibition against πορνεια(= unchastity, fornication) seems incongruous in the midst of the other items from Jewish ceremonial law. Sexual promiscuity could hardly be relegated to Jewish ceremonialism like *kosher* observances. However, there is much to recommend the interpretation that what is in view here is the practice of Gentiles marrying close relatives or mixed marriages between Christians and pagans, cf. W. Neil, *The Acts of the Apostles [NCBC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Marshal, Morgan & Scott, 1981), pp. 173-174. All these marriages the rabbis described as "forbidden for πορνεια", B. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London/New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 431. Fitzmyer, on the basis of the Damascus Document in the Dead Sea Scrolls, would also include polygamy and divorce in the use of the term πορνεια here, cf. J. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles [AB]* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), pp. 557-558.

[53] There are considerable textual variants in the listing of the prohibitions in 15:20, 29 and their repetition in 21:25. The Alexandrian Text and most other manuscripts list the four that appear in the English Bible. The Western Text omits "what is strangled" but adds a form of the "golden rule". The so-called Caesarean Text omits "unchastity". On the whole, it is better to leave the four items as they are traditionally translated, cf. extensive discussion in Metzger, pp. 429-434.

[54] While there was an imperial post in the Roman Empire, the *cursus publicus*, it was not available for private correspondence. Hence, private letters, such as the one envisioned here, had to be delivered by a chosen courier, cf.

members of the Jerusalem church, along with Paul and Barnabas, was entrusted with the encyclical letter. It was common in Greco-Roman culture that the courier(s) of letters were entrusted not only to carry the document but to expand on its contents orally. They were chosen to represent the character of the author(s) in the letter's oral reading and explanation.[55] This procedure is followed here, for Judas and Silas were intended to confirm "by word of mouth" what was written (15:27). Luke offers what appears to be a full copy of the letter addressed from the apostles and elders in Jerusalem to the Christians in Antioch, Syria and Cylicia (15:23). The cities in Pamphylia and southern Galatia are not mentioned in the address, but in any case, they were under the jurisdiction of the church in Antioch, who had sponsored the Gentile mission, so the contents were for them, too. Later, Paul will present the same decisions to other congregations (cf. 16:4), since they were clearly intended for them (cf. 21:25).

The body of the letter made clear that the circumcision teaching did not originate with the apostles (15:24-29). It also emphasized that the decisions handed down were in concert with not only the leadership in the Jerusalem church, but also, the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The four behavioral standards that were most critical for maintaining fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians were listed along with a farewell.

The delegation arrived in Antioch, and their communication was well received (15:30-31). Judas and Silas, who like Barnabas, Simeon and Lucius (cf. 13:1) were prophets, used their gifts of exhortation to encourage the church (15:32; cf. 1 Co. 14:3). They enjoyed fellowship in Antioch with their new Christian compatriots, both Jewish and Grecian, and then departed south for Jerusalem (15:33). Paul and Barnabas continued to serve in the Antioch church (15:35), and possibly Silas, as well.[56]

The Second Great Tour (15:36-18:22)

Some time after the Jerusalem council, while Paul and Barnabas were back at their home base in Antioch, Paul decided that another visit to the new Christian churches was in order (15:36). Barnabas, however, wanted to take John Mark (15:37). There is something of a mystery concerning John Mark's role. It has even been suggested that John Mark was the one who reported to the Jerusalem church

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O. Seitz, *IDB* (1962) III.114.

[55] W. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), pp. 45-46.

[56] Verse 15:34 is missing in the earliest manuscripts, though it appears in the Textus Receptus, i.e., "But it seemed good to Silas to remain there." Whether or not the verse is textually valid, 15:40 implies that Silas remained in Antioch when his companions returned to Jerusalem, or else he returned afterward.

that Gentiles were coming to Christ without accepting Jewish circumcision, since he was the one who could testify most directly about Paul's work after having traveled with the missionary team in Cyprus. Perhaps John Mark was not entirely in accord with Paul's approach to non-Jews, and perhaps this difference contributed to or may have been the primary cause for his abandonment of the team during the first tour. Whatever John Mark's reasons for leaving the missionaries during the first tour, Barnabas apparently felt his cousin deserved another chance. Perhaps he believed that if John Mark actually saw what was happening in these fledgling Gentile congregations he would have a different opinion.

Nevertheless, Paul would have none of it. He resolutely refused to accept John Mark on the team (15:38). In the end, the disagreement was so sharp that the two missionaries parted company. Paul took Silas, one of the representatives from the Jerusalem church, and left by land for northern Syria and Cilicia. Silas was an admirable choice on two counts. He was one of the Jerusalem guarantors of the council's decree (15:22), and he was a Roman citizen (cf. 16:37). Later, he would be a co-sender in Paul's Thessalonian letters, where he is identified by his Greco-Roman name Silvanus (cf. 1 Th. 1:1; 2 Th. 1:1).[57] Barnabas, for his part, took John Mark by sea and sailed for his native country of Cyprus (15:39-41).

Other than Antioch, virtually nothing is known about the churches in Syria and Cilicia. We know that Paul spent time there between his conversion and his initial arrival at Antioch (cf. Ga. 1:21), and we know that the Jerusalem council addressed the encyclical to congregations in these same two provinces (cf. 15:23). Presumably, Paul was instrumental in the establishment of these churches, and he and Silas took the council's letter to each of them, as had been directed. An overland route brought Paul and his company back to the Galatian churches, but in reverse order. He left Tarsus and passed through the "Cilician Gates", a narrow gorge through the Taurus Mountains.[58]

Revisiting Lystra, Derbe and Iconium

In revisiting the Galatian congregations, Paul encountered a young man in Lystra who had been one of his original converts (cf. 1 Ti. 1:2; 1 Co. 4:17).[59] Timothy's earliest spiritual heritage dated back to his Jewish mother and grandmother (2 Ti. 1:5), and under their tutelage, he had become an avid student of the Hebrew scriptures (cf. 2 Ti. 3:15). Because of his excellent reputation, Paul invited Timothy to join the team, though he required that Timothy be circumcised

[57] Also, he seems to have served as an amanuensis for Peter in the writing of 1 Peter (cf. 1 Pe. 5:12).

[58] Ramsey, *Cities*, pp. 112-116.

[59] That Paul calls Timothy "my son" is usually taken to mean that the was converted under Paul's ministry.

because of his Jewish heritage (16:1-3).[60]

It seems that Paul sensed the need for a younger man whom he could train for leadership among the churches he established. This desire was quite possibly his reason for such a firm reaction against John Mark, who left the team in the middle of their work (Ac. 13:5, 13; 15:36-40). Timothy fit Paul's needs admirably. He had been ordained for Christian work at Lystra (1 Ti. 4:14), and his ordination had been accompanied by a prophetic oracle concerning his future (1 Ti. 1:18; 4:14). As Paul's companion, he came to be trusted more and more, first as one who could be left in charge while Paul went to other preaching points (Ac. 17:14-15; cf. 1 Th. 3:1-2, 6), and later, as one who could arrange supplemental resources so that Paul could give his full time to preaching (Ac. 18:5). Paul used Timothy as his advance representative when he was detained (Ac. 19:22; 20:4-6). During his stressful relationship with the Corinthians, Paul used Timothy as a personal emissary (1 Co. 4:17; 16:10-11; cf. Phil. 2:19), and in his Corinthian, Philippian, Colossian and Thessalonian correspondences, he names Timothy as co-sender (2 Co. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; Plmn 1:1; 1 Th. 1:1; 2 Th. 1:1). On at least one occasion, Timothy, also, was incarcerated (He. 13:23).

To the Philippians, Paul paid Timothy the supreme compliment:

> *I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself....* (Phil. 2:20-22).

The missionaries traveled to each of the towns in Galatia, reading the encyclical from the Jerusalem church (16:4-5).

In Philippi

After passing through Phrygia and Galatia but avoiding Asia due to the direction of the Holy Spirit (16:6),[61] the missionaries were casting about for their next preaching point. They reached the border of Mysia, a region in northwestern Asia Minor, though Luke says nothing about them preaching there. They tried to turn back to the east toward Bithynia, but again the Spirit prevented them. Eventually, they came to Troas, a seaport city in Mysia on the Aegean Sea near the ancient site of Troy. While at Troas, Paul had a vision of a Macedonian calling for them to cross the Aegean to the Greek mainland (16:7-9). Taking this as the direction from God they were seeking, they booked passage across the Aegean and sailed for the Macedonian coast by way of the island of Samothrace (16:10-11). Landing at the port of Neapolis,

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[60] By contrast, Paul refused to require circumcision for Titus, who was a Greek (cf. Ga. 2:1-3).

[61] The phrases "prevented by the Holy Spirit" (16:6), and "the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them" (16:7) are intriguing but ambiguous. Such language equally could refer to a visionary event, an inward prompting or an external circumstance.

they walked the 10 miles to Philippi, one of the principle cities of Macedonia (16:12).

The observant reader will have noticed that in 16:10, Luke begins using the first person plural "we". The most obvious explanation is that Luke has joined the missionary team, though he does not describe the circumstances or precisely where or how he joined the group. Presumably, since the "we" passages begin at Troas, Luke joined them there. The first person accounts continue until 16:17, and they will resume again in 20:5.

It is of significance that women in Macedonia were accorded greater independence and status in public affairs than in other parts of the empire. Traditionally, women in Greco-Roman cultures managed the home and for the most part stayed in the "women's quarters." In Macedonia, however, due to the influence of the Macedonian princesses, women came to have greater freedom.[62]

PHILIPPI, MACEDONIA

Philippi, which gained its name from the father of Alexander the Great, had a long history prior to the Roman Empire. The site originally seems to have been chosen because of the Krenides (Greek for "spring"), a spring-fed river and marshland. The ancient city walls, which predate the Roman Period, are still visible as are the ruins of the Greek theater. Macedonia passed into Roman hands in 168 BC, after which it was divided into four districts, Philippi being in the "first" or leading district of the four. In 42 BC, Anthony defeated Brutus at Philippi after the latter's role in the assassination of Julius Caesar. In honor of the victory, Philippi was declared to be a Roman colony

The archaeological excavation of Philippi began in 1914 with the French, though the more recent work has been done by the Greeks. The Via Egnatia, the Roman military and commercial road linking the Aegean with the Adriatic, bisected the city as it ran between Apollonia on the west coast to Kypsela on the east coast just north of the island of Samothrace. Ancient Roman milestones indicate that the total distance of the road was 535 Roman miles (493 English miles).

The population of Philippi largely consisted of Romans and Greeks. The Jewish community appears to have been quite small, and given that Jewish women were meeting for prayer outside the city, presumably there was no synagogue. (Ten men were required for a formal synagogue.)

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[62] Ferguson, p. 58.

The factor of women's greater freedom in Macedonia figures in the missions work of Paul and his companions in Philippi, where they discovered a women's prayer group meeting outside the city gate near the river (16:13).[63] Lydia, an emigrant from Thyatira in Asia, was a merchant dealing in the famous dyed cloth of her home country.[64] Described as "a worshiper of God," she was either a God-fearer or a Jewish proselyte. She accepted Paul's message and received Christian baptism, along with members of her household community (16:14-15a). As a woman of independent means, she invited the group to stay with her household (16:15b).[65]

During Paul's stay in Philippi, his sabbath prayer services were disrupted by a fortune-telling, demoniac slave girl who shouted after them (16:16-17).[66] Distressed for several days by this unwanted attention,[67] Paul finally rebuked her, exorcising the demon, which left her free of the dominating spirit (16:18). No longer able to use her as an oracle, her owners dragged Paul and Silas into the *Agora* (= marketplace) to confront the authorities (16:19-21).[68] With the crowd backing the charge, the

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[63] The meeting place of the women could have been one of three locations: either, the Gangites River bank, just west of the colonial arch on the Via Egnatia (such arches commemorated the privileged status of a colony); the spring-fed Krenides, referred to locally as the "River of Lydia"; or, the Neapolis Gate, where a small stream bed may still be seen, cf. J. McRay, *Archaeology & the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), pp. 286-288.

[64] Thyatira was well-known in the ancient world for its organized trade unions and technology of producing purple dye from the madder root. cf. R. North, *ISBE* (1988) III.846.

[65] The Greco-Roman **οικος** or **οικονομια** (= household) was a large, inclusive and socially cohesive unit, often composed of several families and/or individuals bound together under the authority of the principal family. It might consist of relatives, friends, workers, slaves and even clients whose association was valuable to the household. Thus, when Paul began a Christian community in Lydia's "household," he entered a social institution that made it especially advantageous for minority groups, such as, slaves and women, to participate fully in religious activities, whereas in other social venues they might have been excluded. A further point is that traditionally the religious affiliation of the household leader held for the other members. Hence, Lydia's decision to accept the message of Jesus was communal, cf. D. Tidball, *The Social Context of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1984), pp. 79-86.

[66] Luke's description of her as "having the spirit of a python" (Greek text) may mean that she belonged to the ventriloquist spiritualists mentioned by Plutarch, *de defectu Oraculorum*, 9:414e, cf. J. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 559. Bruce also connects this description with the worship of Apollo at the oracles of Delphi, which was called Pytho, cf. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts [NICNT]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 332.

[67] At first glance, her screams about "the Most High God" and "salvation" may seem to have been appropriate, but the language is ambiguous, since such terms were also used by the mystery religions. A number of ancient documents verify the mystery cults' language of "God the Highest", cf. H. Koester, *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age* (Philadelphia/New York: Fortress/Walter de Gruyter, 1980), p. 195. In general, the mystery cults were religions in which worshipers could share in the life of the gods and goddesses, and especially, the language of "savior" and "salvation" were not unusual, cf. H. Kee, et al., *Understanding the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), pp. 33-36; W. Liefeld, *ISBE* (1988) IV.290.

[68] Three important Greco-Roman terms surface here, demonstrating Luke's intimate knowledge of Greco-Roman institutions. First, the *agora* was the central open space in Hellenistic cities for a marketplace, cf. McCray, p.38. Second, the term *strategois* (= magistrates), the equivalent of *praetors* or *duumvirs*, describes the two collegiate magistrates of a Roman colony responsible for municipal administration, F. Bruce, *Acts*, p. 335. Third, the formal charge against them of "disturbing our city" and "announcing customs which it is not lawful for us, as Romans, to receive or practice" conforms to Roman law. Had not the case been abandoned, the next step would have been to

magistrates ordered Paul and Silas to be stripped, flogged and jailed (16:22).[69] They were put into stocks and left until morning (16:23-24).[70]

In the darkness of the prison, Paul and Silas consoled themselves by praying and singing while the other prisoners listened (16:25). Abruptly, an earthquake shook the jail so violently that the anchors on the fetters of all the prisoners broke free from the walls while the prison doors were jarred open (16:26). The jailer, whose failure to keep his prisoners for trial was punishable by execution, suddenly grasped his short sword in order to commit suicide. Paul's shout stopped him just in time: "Don't harm yourself! We are all here" (16:27-28)! When lamps were brought, the jailer fell before Paul and Silas, exclaiming, "What must I do to be saved?" The answer was the classic Christian expression, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved-you and your household" (16:29-31)!

The missionaries explained their Christian message to the jailer and his household with the result that, after the prisoners' wounds were washed, the whole family received Christian baptism as a demonstration of their new faith (16:32-34). This, then, was the second Greco-Roman household to receive the Christian message in Europe.[71] By morning, the magistrates sent the lictors to the jail for the prisoners' release, but Paul stood on his and Silas' rights of Roman citizenship and demanded an apology (16:35-37)! One of the rights of Roman citizenship was that they should not be summarily punished without a formal hearing and sentence. Why Paul did not appeal to his Roman citizenship before the beating, we are not told. Perhaps he did and was ignored or unheard during the commotion. In any case, the magistrates had made a serious breach of Roman law.[72] When the news reached the two magistrates that their prisoners were Roman citizens, they came personally to appease them

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arraign the missionaries before the proconsul, cf. A. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), pp. 78-83.

[69] Roman scourging varied with the status of the prisoner. Freemen were beaten with rods of elm or birch by *rhabdouchoi* (= bearers of rods, cf. 16:35, 38). Slaves were beaten with whips, cf. M. Greenberg, *IDB* (1962) IV.245. Later, Paul will testify that he received beatings with rods on three occasions (cf. 2 Co. 11:25).

[70] If these stocks were anything like those described by Eusebius, they may have been terribly uncomfortable! Eusebius describes them as having several foot holes so the legs could be stretched as far as five holes apart for torture, cf. *Ecclesiastical History*, V.1.27.

[71] A question arises here (16:33) as well as elsewhere concerning the debate over paedo-baptism versus believers' baptism (cf. 16:15; Ac. 10:24; 1 Co. 1:13-16). Just who may have been included in the baptisms of a household? All household baptisms in the New Testament are described in the context of Greco-Roman culture, where the household was a large, inclusive unit often including a number of families (see footnote #64). The odds of a household not having infants are relatively small, and in this case, the Greek text specifically says that "he and all his" were baptized. The NIV translation of **οι αυτου απαντες** (= all the ones of him) as "his family" may be misleading, given the modern conventional understanding of the term family. At the same time, there is no way to be certain that the group did or did not include infants. Liberty must be granted in both directions and the theological debate resolved on other grounds.

[72] Sherwin-White, pp. 71-76.

(16:38-39). Paul and Silas agreed to leave the city, and after saying goodbye to the new believers at Lydia's house, they left Philippi by the Via Egnatia (16:40). Luke, apparently, stayed in Philippi, since the "we" sections disappear until 20:5.

In Thessalonica

Working their way westward, the missionaries passed through two major towns on the Via Egnatia without stopping, Amphipolis, about 30 miles to the west and the capital of the first district, and Apollonia, yet another 30 miles westward. Finally, another 38 miles later, they reached Thessalonica, the mid-point on the Via Egnatia between the west and east ends (17:1).

> *THESSALONICA, MACEDONIA*
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> Thessalonica on the Thermaic Gulf was the largest city in Macedonia. It was named after Alexander the Great's half-sister, and in the Roman Period served as the capital of the second district. Under Roman rule, it was declared a "free city," which meant that it was under senatorial jurisdiction but had its own democratic assembly. As the capital of the Province of Macedonia, Thessalonica was an important cultural center for poets, philosophers and rhetoricians. The leading families in Thessalonica were educated and affluent.
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> Excavations in Thessalonica have uncovered parts of the Roman Period wall, two of the original three spans of the Arch of Galerius erected on the Via Egnatia, the Vardar Gate, another arch on the Via Egnatia, and the theater and imperial Roman Forum.
>
> **John McCray, *Archaeology & the New Testament***

Thessalonica had a large enough Jewish community to boast a synagogue, and as usual, Paul went there first, spending three sabbaths discussing the fulfillment of the ancient Scriptures in Jesus' passion and resurrection.[73] Some of the Jews, God-fearers and prominent women accepted the message of Jesus' messiahship (17:2-4).[74]

As had happened on the first journey in the Galatian cities of Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the larger share of Thessalonian synagogue members did not receive Paul's messianic interpretation gracefully. They incited a mob, probably idlers from

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[73] In the setting of such a culturally sophisticated Greek city, Luke's descriptive language of Paul's rhetoric is insightful. He uses no less than five Greek verbs to describe Paul's presentation of the gospel: διαλεγομαι (= to discuss, lecture), διανοιγω (= to open up, explain), παρατιθημι(= to demonstrate, point out, prove), καταγγελλω(= to proclaim, announce), and πειθω(= to persuade, convince).

[74] The Western Text specifically identifies the women as wives of the leading men.

the *Agora*, to break into the home of Jason, one of the converts, hoping to bring the missionaries before the democratic assembly of the people (17:5). When they found neither Paul nor Silas, they dragged Jason and a few other new Christians before the six politarchs,[75] accusing them of causing a civil disturbance and acclaiming a new Caesar (17:6-7).[76] The assembly and magistrates were alarmed, naturally, since other disturbances of a similar nature had occurred among the Jews in the empire,[77] but they wisely avoided panic and simply required Jason and his fellows to post bond for Paul's quiet disappearance (17:8-9). Paul had little choice but to leave town.

It might be supposed that Paul spent little more than three weeks in Thessalonica (cf. 17:2), but other factors may bear upon the question. We know from the Philippian letter that at least twice Paul received financial help while at Thessalonica (cf. Phil. 4:16), and we also know that he supported himself by his own trade of tent-making (cf. 1 Th. 2:9; 2 Th. 3:7-12). Such factors might tip the balance toward a somewhat longer stay.

In Beroea

Under cover of darkness, Paul and Silas slipped away from Thessalonica southwest to Beroea, a town about 40 miles distant in the next district. Beroea was not on the Via Egnatia, but there were enough Jews in the population for a synagogue (17:10). Here, Paul's message about Jesus was received with excitement and much searching of the scriptures. He gained converts from among the Jews and Greeks, both women and men (17:11-12).

How long Paul's missionary work proceeded peaceably, Luke does not tell us, but eventually Jews from Thessalonica heard that he was in Beroea and came to warn the populace (17:13). Once more, there was little option but to get Paul away. Silas and Timothy stayed on at Beroea, but Paul went to the coast. His route is uncertain, but presumably he went to Dion, just four miles from the sea, or any one of three other harbors north of Dion. From the coast, he probably sailed for Athens, which lay just north of the Peloponnesus.[78]

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[75] It once was popular to debunk Luke's political accuracy because of his use of the title πολιταρχης (= politarch, civil magistrate). In 1960, however, Carl Schuler published a list of 32 inscriptions containing this term, 19 of them from Thessalonica. One of the most important was from the Vardar Gate, which existed well before the time of St. Paul, cf. J. McCray, p. 295.

[76] The Greek βασιλευς (= king) doubles for the Latin word Caesar.

[77] Claudius had expelled the Jews from Rome over rioting at about this same time, cf. Suetonius, *Lives of Caesar*, 25.4, and a letter was published stating that Jews from Palestine should not be invited into Alexandria, Egypt, since they were "fomenting a general plague throughout the whole world", cf. F. Bruce, *Paul*, p. 225.

[78] McCray, pp. 297-298.

In Athens

With Luke at Philippi and Silas and Timothy at Beroea, Paul reached Athens alone (cf. 1 Th. 3:1). Obviously, he expected the others to join him soon (cf. 17:15b), but while he waited for them in Athens, he was deeply disturbed by the thorough-going paganism of the city (17:16).

As was his pattern, Paul attended the Sabbath services at the synagogue in Athens, where he communicated his Christian message to both Jews and God-fearers (17:17a). However, he also spoke daily to the pagans in the commercial agora on the eastern side of the city (17:17b). He debated with Stoic and Epicurean philosophers,[79] who were not overly impressed by Paul's message about Jesus and the resurrection (17:18).[80] These latter invited him to the assembly of the Aeropagus, the council that supervised education and visiting lecturers in Athens.[81] Several scholars have suggested that the Athenians thought Paul wanted to add two new demons to the pantheon,[82] Jesus and his consort Anastasis (the Greek word for "resurrection"), and this is what was meant by the reference to "foreign deities" (17:19-21).[83]

Though Paul obviously believed that Athens was full of superstitious paganism, his address to the Areopagus was tactful. He began by acknowledging their devotion to religion (17:22),[84] remarking especially upon an altar to an unknown

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[79] Stoic and Epicurean philosophy both had a long history, and both originated in Athens about 300 BC. Common features between them included their penchant for individualism, their lack of concern about society's welfare, and their preoccupation with materialism, both categorically denying the existence of any spiritual substances (even the gods and the soul were believed to be formed from matter). There were unique features, also. Zeno (founder of the Stoics) taught that the cosmos is an ordered whole in which all contradictions are resolved for ultimate good. Evil is relative, the necessary incidents on the way to universal perfection. Fate, however, ruled all, and people were free only in the sense that they could accept their fate or resent it. The supreme duty of humans was to resign themselves to the order of the universe, which in turn would bring them happiness. The highest good was serenity of mind, while duty and self-discipline were the primary virtues. Stoicism was characterized by egalitarianism, pacifism and humanitarianism.

Epicurus, the founder of Epicureanism, accepted the atomic theory of Democritus, that is, the belief that the basic building blocks of all things are indivisible atoms which are combined to form the physical structures of life. Unlike the Stoics, Epicureans affirmed human freedom. Ethically, the greatest good was pleasure, though pleasure was not defined strictly in terms of self-indulgence, but included serenity of soul, the absence of pain, and the elimination of fear. Still, unlike the Stoics, virtue was not good in itself, but only insofar as it brought personal happiness. For Epicureans, political and social life had limited value and absolute justice was impossible. The gods were remote and took little interest in the world, since they were preoccupied with their own happiness, cf. E. Burns et al., *World Civilizations*, 6th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), I.217-219.

[80] They called him a σπερμολογος (= seed-picker), a sarcasm meaning that Paul simply picked up scraps of gossip here and there but was not an original thinker, cf. B. Demarest, *NIDNTT* (1971), III.525.

[81] *BAG* (1979) 105.

[82] For Greeks, a basic animism underlay the word "demon", where the term was used for lesser deities. The word δαιμονιον used in 17:18 is less specific than θεος, and hence was used for undefined superhuman powers, cf. W. Foerster, *TDNT* (1964), II.1-10.

[83] Neil, p. 190; Fitzmyer, p. 605.

[84] The word δεισιδαιμων can be used in the pejorative sense of superstition (so KJV), but also in the neutral sense

deity. Taking this as a confession of Athenian ignorance about the divine nature (17:23), Paul proceeded to set forth the Judeo-Christian view of God in a manner very similar to his speech to the pagans in Iconium on the first tour. Notice the parallels between the two sermons:

SERMON AT ICONIUM	SERMON AT ATHENS
God...made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them... (14:15)	*God...made the world and everything in it... (17:24)*
In the past, he let all nations go their own way... (14:16)	*In the past God overlooked such ignorance... (17:30)*
He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy (14:17)	*...he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. (17:25)*

Paul's discourse to the intellectuals follows three main lines of thought about God, humans and accountability. First, one God created the universe (17:24a). Paul's consistent use of the singular form would have been striking in an Athenian context. Furthermore, God is self-sufficient. *It is not because he lacks anything that he accepts service at men's hands, for he is himself the universal giver of life and breath and all else (17:25, NEB).* Hence, God doesn't live in temples, and he doesn't need human devotees to justify his existence (17:24b).

Second, all humans in the world are related, and they descend from the first primordial human. Such egalitarianism would have been a clear point of contact with the Stoics, especially, who rejected racism and slavery. Human distribution throughout the world and human placement in time was the result of divine appointment (17:26). God's purpose, all along, was that humans would seek relationship with him, and unlike the Epicurean notion that God was remote, Paul asserted that God was near (17:27). Paul supported his points on anthropology by appealing to Greek literature, first in a line from Epimenides and second in a line from Aratus (17:28).[85] In both of these works, the deity envisioned is Zeus, head of

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of religion (so NIV, NEB, ASV, RSV, JB and most other English versions). It is probably used in the latter sense here, since it would make no sense for Paul to antagonize the council with his opening words.

[85] The line from the Cretan poet Epimenides is the fourth in a quatrain in which the poet rebukes the impiety of the

the Greek pantheon, but Paul is hardly trying to conflate Zeus with Yahweh. Rather, he simply points out that familiar Greek writers also offered wisdom that corroborated what he was saying. If humans were created by God, then God can never be represented truly by things that humans themselves create (18:29). Paul's point, of course, is the same as that of the first and second commandments from the Decalogue (Ex. 20:1-4//Dt. 5:6-10), but to pagans he could hardly appeal to the Torah.

ATHENS, ACHAIA

By the time of St. Paul, the city of Athens had lost much of its prominence from the classical period, but it was still an important city culturally. It has been extensively excavated. The city was dominated by the Acropolis with its classical temple, the Parthenon, accessible by the marble stairway constructed by Claudius in AD 42. Excavators have uncovered temples to Rome and Augustus, Zeus, Athena and Ares, among others, in addition to the Greek agora and the Roman forum. Originally, the agora was kept clear for the democratic assemblies for which Athens is famous. As a conquered city, however, the agora soon became filled with buildings and monuments.

The eastern market, another agora, was used for commercial purposes, and by the time of Paul it was filled with various altars, statues and temples. The Roman satirist, Juvenal, remarked that it was easier to find a god than a man in Athens! Several ancient writers have remarked about altars to "unknown gods", and one spoke about an altar to "the god whom it may concern." The eastern market of Athens had become more-or-less a religious museum.

Other excavated features of 1st century Athens include a 66 seat public latrine, the Odeion (music hall), the theater of Dionysus, and Mars Hill (lit., "the hill of Ares"), the meeting place of the Areopagus, the Athenian council of 500 who dominated Athenian government.

John McCray, *Archaeology & the New Testament*

Finally, the issue of human accountability to God logically follows the first two premises. If there is only one God, the Creator, and if humans are his creation, then it follows that they are accountable to him. Idolatry, which is a distortion of true religion, had been mercifully overlooked for a long time (17:30a; cf. Ro. 3:25b). Now, with the coming of Jesus, a new era had dawned. All humans in the whole world are called to accountability for their lives. They must turn to God (17:30b), for

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Cretans for building Zeus a tomb: *But you [i.e., Zeus] are not dead: you live and abide forever, for in you we live and move and have our being.* (Paul will quote the second line from the same quatrain to Titus, cf. Tit. 1:12). The line from the Stoic poet Aratus comes from the poem, *Natural Phenomena*, a celebration of Zeus: *Let us begin with Zeus...for we are also his offspring*, cf. Bruce, *Paul*, 242.

they will surely appear in judgment before Jesus, God's appointed judge (17:31a).[86] The clinching argument that Jesus is God's chosen representative was his resurrection from the dead (17:31b).

The Christian content in Paul's speech came in a rush at the end. The idea of a "resurrection of dead men", in view of the widespread Greek notion of the immortality of the soul and the temporality of the body, must have seemed a radical if not preposterous speculation (17:32-33). At the institution of the Areopagus centuries earlier, Aeschylus in his *Eumenides* had the god Apollo say, "When the dust has soaked up a man's blood, once he is dead, there is no resurrection."[87] Paul flatly contradicted this Greek world view!

The response to Paul's speech was a mixture of curiosity and ridicule, though at least one of the members of the Areopagus accepted the message of Christ, along with a few other Athenians (17:34). However, so far as we know, no Christian church was established at Athens. Later, when Paul speaks of the "firstfruits of Achaia," he refers to a family in Corinth (cf. 1 Co. 16:15).

In Corinth

Neither Luke, Silas nor Timothy arrived in Athens to join Paul, so he continued southward about 50 miles across the isthmus to Corinth on the northern rim of the Peloponnesus (18:1). Unlike Athens, which had suffered a significant decline in fortunes, Corinth was booming. It's location near the isthmus that connected the Peloponnesus to the Grecian mainland virtually assured its role as an economic and political center. It commanded the land route from the one to the other, and in the words of Strabo, it was "master of two harbors."[88] After the Roman war of conquest, which damaged Corinth extensively, the city was rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 44 BC and elevated to the status of a colony. Thus, when Paul arrived in Corinth in about 50 AD, the city was on the rise with many of its official, commercial and religious structures in the process of restoration. Paul probably entered the city by the Lechaeum Road, the best preserved of Corinth's ancient thoroughfares. By his own admission, his entry into the city was accompanied by "weakness and fear and much trembling" (1 Co. 2:3).

While at Corinth, Paul encountered a Jewish couple,[89] tentmakers who had moved to Corinth after Claudius had expelled the Jews from Rome just a year

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[86] Though his Athenian audience would not have known it, Paul is here quoting Psalm 96:13.

[87] Bruce, *Paul*, pp. 246-247.

[88] Strabo, *Geography*, 8.6.20a.

[89] That Priscilla and Aquila were Christians is apparent from their several mentions in other New Testament documents (cf. Ro. 16:3; 1 Co. 16:19; 2 Ti. 4:19). They eventually became overseers of a house church in Ephesus. How they came to accept the Christian faith is unknown.

previous in AD 49 (18:2).[90] Because of their common trade skills, Paul stayed and worked with them (18:3).[91]

CORINTH, ACHAIA

Excavations in Corinth have been extensive. Across the isthmus, an ancient roadway about 3 ½ miles long was uncovered called the *diolkos*. Grooves about 5' apart served as tracks for wooden platforms on wheels that transported cargo from the Saronic Gulf to the Gulf of Corinth, thus eliminating the long sea voyage around the Peloponnesus.

Near Corinth at Isthmia was one of the permanent sites for the biennial Isthmian Games for athletes and artists. Paul's year and a half stay in Corinth meant that he was there in AD 51, when the games were held, and his references to athletic and artistic elements, such as, boxing, racing, victory wreaths and musical instruments may well have been drawn from his knowledge of the festival (cf. 1 Co. 9:24-27; 14:7-8).

Like Athens, Corinth was home to many shrines and temples. Statues of Athena and Apollo along with several temples and sacred precincts have been excavated. These include a temple to Tyche, goddess of good fortune, a temple to Hera, wife of Zeus, another temple dedicated to the whole pantheon of Greco-Roman deities, a fountain shrine dedicated to Poseidon, the god in whose honor the Isthmian games were held, and a shrine to Aphrodite, goddess of love and fertility. Aphrodite also had a temple on the Acrocorinth, the rugged hill rising some 1500' above the city. Temples to Demeter and Kore also have been excavated on the Acrocorinth. The city featured the *Asclepion*, a medical complex dedicated to Asclepius, the god of healing, and it had quarters for bathing, dining, exercise and sleeping. (The god's instructions for cures were believed to come in dreams.) Many terra-cotta models of body parts were excavated here, symbols of cures.

In addition to the religious shrines, Corinth had extensive commercial structures. These included a Roman forum, a theater, a market, public baths, two matching basilicas, extensive shops along the Lechaeum Road, a gymnasium, a *bema* (judgment seat) and many other civic buildings.

V. Furnish, "Corinth in Paul's Time: What Can Archaeology Tell Us?, *Biblical Archaeology Review* (May/June 1988)

[90] Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, 25.4.

[91] As a prospective rabbi, Paul had been obliged to learn a trade, since rabbis were to offer their services free of charge, cf. Neil, p. 195.

Again, as was his pattern, Paul attended the Sabbath synagogue services, trying to gain adherents to the Christian faith from among the Jews and God-fearers (18:4).[92] During this period, Silas and Timothy finally caught up with him, and presumably due to the offerings they brought from the believers in Macedonia (cf. 2 Co. 11:8-9; Phil. 4:15), Paul was able to suspend his tent-making trade and devote his full energies to evangelism (18:5). Eventually, as had happened elsewhere, Jewish opposition became so severe that Paul turned to the pagans with the message of Jesus (18:6). He did not move far, however-only to the home of a God-fearer next door to the synagogue, which must have caused considerable resentment on the part of the synagogue members (18:7).[93] Among Paul's converts in Corinth he numbered the synagogue ruler, Crispus (18:8; cf. 1 Co. 1:14), and from his later letters, we can add Erastus, the city director of public works (Ro. 16:23),[94] along with several others (Ro. 16:22-24; 1 Co. 1:14-16), who were baptized either by Paul or under his ministry (18:8b; cf. 19:22; 1 Co. 1:13-17; 2 Ti. 4:20).

How long Paul intended to remain in Corinth Luke does not say, but his stay was extended due to a vision in which Christ encouraged him not to succumb to his fears (18:9-10; cf. 1 Co. 2:3). He stayed there a full year and a half, probably from sometime in AD 50 until sometime in AD 52. During this period, a new proconsul of Achaia, Lucius Junius Gallio, took office probably in July AD 51 (18:12a).[95] Paul's Jewish opponents hauled him into the court of Gallio, charging him with advocating a *religio illicita* (illegal religion).[96] As Paul prepared to defend himself, Gallio preempted him by dismissing the charge (18:12b-16). The exact nature of the accusation is not entirely clear, whether Paul's opponents approached the proconsul under the guise of Jewish law or Roman law. In either case, the proconsul felt no compulsion to honor their charge, regardless of its formation, since it involved no

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[92] Two excavated artifacts testify to the Jewish community in Corinth, a stone lintel with the inscription, "Synagogue of the Hebrews", and a marble arch post decorated with menorahs, though both may be from a time somewhat later than Paul, cf. V. Furnish, "Corinth in Paul's Time: What Can Archaeology Tell Us?", *BAR* (May/June 1988), p. 26.

[93] Several scholars believe, on comparing Acts 18:7 with Ro. 16:23, that Titius Justus was the same as Gaius. If so, he was a Roman citizen, and his full name would have been Gaius Titius Justus, cf. E. Goodspeed, "Gaius Titius Justus," *JBL* (69 (1950), pp. 382f.

[94] A remarkable independent verification of Erastus' name was excavated in a pavement inscription between the market and the theater. Originally, bronze letters filled the depressions in the pavement, and although the bronze is no longer there, the depressed letters can be clearly read: "Erastus in return for his aedileship laid [the pavement] at his own expense." An aedile was a magistrate in charge of streets, markets, games and public buildings, cf. Furnish, p. 20.

[95] An inscription from Delphi puts Gallio's tenure as proconsul in the 26th acclamation of Claudius as *imperator*, a date that can be cross-referenced with other Roman sources. Proconsuls normally took office on July 1st, cf. Bruce, *Paul*, p. 253.

[96] Presumably, this hearing was held before the actual *bema* excavated in Corinth, a ceremonial tribunal platform in the center of the Roman forum, cf. McRay, pp. 333-335.

demonstrable crime but rather a debate that clearly derived from Jewish religion.[97] He ejected them all from the court, ordering that they must settle their differences without the help of the Roman administration. The crowd listening in at the forum[98] promptly attacked Sosthenes, the synagogue ruler, in a vicious expression of anti-Jewish sentiment (18:17). Gallio chose to ignore the incident entirely. Just how Sosthenes stood in relation to Paul at this time is also unclear. Presumably he was one of Paul's accusers. Later, however, he is mentioned as a Christian leader in Corinth (cf. 1 Co. 1:1). So, Paul continued his ministry in Corinth before finally sailing home toward Syria. When he left, he took with him Priscilla and Aquila, the Jewish Christian tentmakers (18:18a).

The Thessalonian Letters

When Paul was forced to leave Macedonia so abruptly-in his own words, he was "torn away" from them (1 Th. 2:17a)-he left with inward misgivings concerning the longevity of the Thessalonians' new faith (cf. 1 Th. 3:5). He would have returned, if possible (1 Th. 2:17b-18), but as this was not feasible, he attempted to communicate to them from Athens, finally sending instructions to Timothy, who had stayed behind in Beroea (cf. 17:15), that he should go back to Thessalonica in his stead (1 Th. 3:2, 5). At last, when Timothy rejoined Paul in Corinth (cf. 18:5), Paul was greatly comforted to know that the Thessalonians had survived with their faith intact (1 Th. 3:6-10).

From Timothy's report on the Christians in Thessalonica, Paul had a good sense of their needs. In response, he wrote to them twice in about AD 50 or 51 during his lengthy stay at Corinth. These letters are what we know as 1 and 2 Thessalonians, though their order and provenance is somewhat debated. Some suggest that 2 Thessalonians is the earlier of the two, while others wonder if one letter was sent to Gentile Christians (1 Thessalonians) while the other was sent to Jewish Christians (2 Thessalonians).[99] In general, however, no argument has been compelling that the traditional order needs revision.

In Ephesus

Cenchrea, the eastern port on the Saronic Gulf just half a dozen miles from

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[97] For the various possibilities of the framing of the charge, see Sherwin-White, pp. 99ff.

[98] Most interpreters, on the basis of a Western textual variant and later ecclesiastical texts, understand the Greek παντες (= all) to refer to bystanders in the forum, though in most manuscripts the meaning is ambiguous. The KJV, following this variant, reads "the Greeks," i.e., the Gentile community, cf. Metzger, p. 463.

[99] On these critical issues, see the New Testament introductions, e.g., D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1970), pp. 575ff.

Corinth, became Paul's point of departure from Greece (18:18).[100] Here, Paul took a vow, presumably a temporary Nazarite vow, given the description of him cutting his hair (cf. Nu. 6).[101] From Greece, he sailed across the Aegean Sea to Ephesus, the capital of the Roman Province of Asia. He made brief contact with the synagogue there, giving the resident Jews a chance to hear his Christian message (18:19). However, he declined to stay, probably due to the urgency of his vow, but promised to return when he could (18:20-21). In his place, he left Priscilla and Aquila. Continuing his voyage, he sailed for Caesarea on the Palestinian coast south of Mt. Carmel.[102] Embarking at Caesarea, he "went up" and greeted the church. The expression "went up" is most commonly used of going up to Jerusalem (because of its elevation in the Judean mountains), so presumably the church with which Paul made contact was the Jerusalem church. While in Jerusalem, he would have completed his vow. Afterwards, he "went down" to Antioch (18:22).[103]

The Third Great Tour (Acts 18:23-21:17)

The interval between the 2nd and 3rd missions tour appears to have been relatively short. Luke only says that Paul "spent some time" in Antioch before leaving again. Though the great circumcision controversy occupied much energy and time between the 2nd and 3rd tour, now, with the Jerusalem council's blessing, Paul was free to engage directly in the work to which he had been called. While one might suppose that a trip back to Antioch was altogether unnecessary, in fact it was probably very necessary, both in terms of reporting to the mother church on the success of the 2nd tour as well as to gain added financial support for a 3rd tour.

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[100] The harbor at Cenchrea has been excavated by Indiana University and the University of Chicago, cf. McRay, pp. 336-338. At some point, a Christian community sprang up in Cenchrea, and Paul was personally acquainted with Phoebe, one of its leaders (cf. Ro. 16:1-2).

[101] Usually, it is assumed that Paul cut his hair one last time before entering into the temporary Nazarite vow, after which he would let his hair grow for the duration of the vow and then shave off the new growth, offering it in the Jerusalem temple as a gift symbolizing his full commitment to God (cf. Nu. 6:18), cf. Neil, pp. 198-199. Alternatively, he may have taken the vow earlier and was now completing it, though this seems less likely, since the completion of such vows was normally performed in the temple. The customary length of vows was 30 days, cf. Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 2.16.1, though due to his travel itinerary, Paul may have taken longer. In the Western Text, reflected in the KJV, Paul stated, "I must by all means keep this feast [i.e., Passover] that cometh in Jerusalem" (18:21), cf. Metzger, p. 465. Hence, his stay at Ephesus was short. Presumably, then, Acts 18:22 includes a visit to Jerusalem, even though not directly mentioned by Luke. Whether Paul's vow was an expression of grief over illness or misfortune or an offering of thanks or some other concern for his success in Corinth is unclear.

[102] Assuming that Paul was going to Jerusalem for Passover, which occurs in the spring, this season would have been treacherous for sea travel. Perhaps one of his three shipwrecks occurred on this voyage (cf. 2 Co. 11:25), cf. Neil, p. 199.

[103] Westerners should not be confused by the expressions "went up" and "went down". Though in modern maps we would usually take such expressions to mean "north" and "south" respectively, in ancient Israel they refer to elevation, not direction. Jerusalem was "up"; leaving Jerusalem for any destination necessarily would be "down."

The brevity of Luke's travelogue shows that Paul's initial objective for the 3rd tour was Ephesus. He had hoped to preach in Asia during his 2nd tour, but had been prevented by divine redirection (cf. 16:6). However, his brief visit to Ephesus had ended with a promise to return (cf. 18:20-21), and he was eager to make good on his promise. Paul's route to Ephesus is not stated, but presumably he followed his earlier inland route, since once more he visited the congregations in Galatia and Phrygia (18:23; cf. 16:6).[104]

Encounter with Apollos

Between Paul's first visit to Ephesus and his return, an important event occurred in the city. Priscilla and Aquila, the Jewish couple whom Paul had left in Ephesus, encountered an Alexandrian orator named Apollos who was a skilled exegete of the (presumably) Septuagint and who knew about the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus (18:24-25a). Luke's description of Apollos leaves the reader in some doubt about his religious standing. On the one hand, he "had been instructed in the way of the Lord."[105] He accurately taught about John and Jesus. On the other hand, he "knew only the baptism of John" (18:25b). Does Luke mean that Apollos had not yet received Christian baptism? If so, it seems odd that Luke does not state that Apollos was baptized in the name of Christ. Still, so far as we know, the apostles themselves were never baptized in any way other than under John's baptism. On the other hand, might Luke mean that Apollos was unaware that the baptism in the Spirit, which John predicted (cf. Mt. 3:11//Mk. 1:8//Lk. 3:16; Ac. 1:5; 11:15-17), had been fulfilled at Pentecost? If so, again it seems odd that Luke should omit any description of Apollos being filled with the Spirit.[106] Though the exact deficiency in Apollos' Christian theology is not entirely clear,[107] Priscilla and Aquila, after hearing him

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[104] Many scholars understand the term *Phrygian* to be adjectival, i.e., what Luke intends is "the Phrygian and Galatian country," not "Phrygia and the Galatian country", cf. C. Hemer, *ISBE* (1986), III.863. If so (and assuming the correctness of the South Galatian theory), then Paul here revisits the churches of Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, Pisidia, just as he did at the beginning of the 2nd tour.

[105] Some early manuscripts in the Western Text specify that his instruction in Christian thought had been in his homeland, cf. Metzger, p. 466.

[106] It is also debatable whether the expression ζεων τω πνευματι (= burning in spirit) refers to his human spirit or the divine Spirit. Most translators opt for the former, though a few capitalize the "S" (so Goodspeed, Williams, Kasemann).

[107] Apollos' shortcomings may have been related to Alexandrian allegory, which was popularized by Philo, the famous Alexandrian allegorist in the 1st century. Philo's works have been preserved in considerable quantity in which he attempted to harmonize Greek philosophy with the Hebrew Bible. Also possible is that Apollos expressed some early Gnostic form of Christianity, such as that preserved in the Coptic *Gospel According to Thomas* (New York: Harper, 1959). This work, dating to around the beginning of the 2nd century, contains many sayings of Jesus that are not in the canonical gospels (though it also contains sayings that appear in the canonical gospels). The early church rejected Gnostic teaching as heresy, and if Apollos had received some early form of such thought, Priscilla and Aquila might well have needed to steer him toward Christian orthodoxy.

expound the Scriptures in the synagogue service, approached him quietly afterward to more adequately instruct him (18:26).[108]

The Christians in Ephesus encouraged Apollos to cross the Aegean to Achaia, and they wrote letters of introduction to aid his acceptance by the church there. The pattern of introductory letters seems to have been more-or-less standard among the early Christian travelers (cf. 1 Co. 16:3; 2 Co. 3:1). Apollos went to Corinth (cf. 19:1), where he became a strong force among the Christians there (cf. 1 Co. 1:12; 3:4-6, 22; 4:6). Though later some Corinthians championed Apollos over against Paul, an attitude that Paul rebuked, there seems to have been no personal animosity between the two leaders. Paul acknowledged Apollos as a fellow missionary (i.e., "apostle", cf. 1 Co. 4:9), and he considered him a brother in the gospel (1 Co. 16:12).

In Ephesus Again

Traveling by road,[109] Paul returned to Ephesus as he had promised (19: 1; cf. 18:21). Upon his arrival, he discovered a group of disciples who, on the face of it, were somewhat similar to Apollos before his encounter with Priscilla and Aquila. They knew of the ministry of John the Baptist, but their knowledge of the messianic gift of the Spirit was limited. Their answer to Paul's question probably means that they had not yet heard that the promised baptism in the Spirit had been fulfilled at Pentecost (19:2; cf. 1:5).

Two important questions arise here. One concerns the use of the term "disciples" to describe this group. Does Luke mean that they were Christian disciples (admittedly with some substandard knowledge) or merely John's disciples? Both positions have strong advocates.[110] There is some evidence of John the Baptist sects as late as the early 3rd century, who claimed that John, not Jesus, was the messiah.[111] The precise status of these "disciples" at Ephesus remains ambiguous.

The second question concerns the Greek participle in Paul's query: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit *when you believed?*" The Greek aorist participle πιστευσαντες has been translated in two ways, both as "since ye believed" (i.e.,

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[108] Priscilla and Aquila were leaders of a house church in Ephesus (cf. 1 Co. 16:19), so it is apparent that Christian Jews in Ephesus attended both the synagogue service on the Sabbath as well as Christian meetings at other times.

[109] The NIV translates ανωτερικα (= higher, upper) as "the interior," i.e., a sort of Ephesian hinterland. However, it is also possible that Luke means Paul avoided the main road by the Lycus and Maeander valleys and took a more northerly route, which brought him to Ephesus from the north side of Mt. Messogis, cf. Bruce, *Paul*, pp. 286.

[110] Scholars viewing them as Christians with some deficiency include Bruce, *Acts*, pp. 384-385; J. Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles [AB]* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), p. 187; R. Dillon and J. Fitzmyer, "Acts of the Apostles," *JBC* (1968), pp. II.201-202; G. Lampe, "Acts," *PBC* (1981), p. IX.493. Scholars viewing them as non-Christians include I. Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles [TNTC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 305; Longenecker, *EBC*, p. IX.493; E. Harrison, *Acts: The Expanding Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1975), p. 289.

[111] Recognitions of Clement, I.liv.

subsequent to faith, so KJV) and "when you believed" (i.e., coincident with faith, so RSV, NEB, NIV, NASB, NAB, ASV, JB, TEV and the NKJB, which apparently corrects the KJV). Those who champion the former translation, usually from the Pentecostal-charismatic persuasion, argue for a separation of the gift of the Spirit from conversion-initiation.[112] Those who adopt the latter translation argue that the gift of the Spirit normally is to be expected in the response of faith itself, not at some subsequent time, hence, Paul's question. Apparently, Paul was not sure about this group's Christian faith, and he expressed his question about the Spirit in a tone of surprise, implying that unless they have received the Spirit, whatever their faith it was not fully Christian.[113]

The two questions are related, of course. Most non-Pentecostal evangelicals conclude that the disciples at Ephesus were not Christians prior to their confrontation with Paul. In this view, the expression "certain disciples" (19:1) distinguishes them from "the disciples" (19:9), the former referring only to disciples of John the Baptist and the latter referring to Christians.[114] Alternatively, Pentecostal interpreters believe them to have been Christians all along.[115] However this interpretive question is resolved, Paul's instruction to them recalled that John the Baptist urged faith in the one who would succeed him (19:3-4). Upon Paul's teaching, the group was baptized with respect to their faith in Jesus as the messiah, and just as had happened at the home of Cornelius and in Jerusalem at Pentecost, the group spoke in other languages when they received the gift of the Spirit (19:5-7).[116]

Following his normal pattern, Paul first appealed to the members of the

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[112] H. Ervin, *Spirit Baptism: A Biblical Investigation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), p. 79 (footnote 55). The goal of this exegesis, of course, is to contend that the gift of the Spirit is a second work of grace subsequent to salvation.

[113] J. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), pp. 86-87.

[114] Dunn, p. 83-84.

[115] R. Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendricksen, 1984), pp. 68, 90 (footnote #4).

[116] Two further issues arise from this passage. One concerns the meaning of being baptized "into the name" of the Lord Jesus, while the other concerns the phenomenon of speaking with tongues. With regard to water baptism, the expression εις το ονομα (= into the name) probably is idiomatic and refers not so much to a spoken formula as to the transfer of ownership, as when money is paid "into the account" of a certain individual. As such, the candidate for baptism passes into the ownership of the one designated, cf. M. Harris, *NIDNNT* (1978), III.1209. With regard to speaking in tongues, the double description "they spoke with tongues and prophesied" probably means that the content of the tongues was some sort of praise language comparable to the infilling of Zechariah (Lk. 1:67ff.), the converts in Jerusalem at Pentecost (cf. 2:11), and the converts at Caesarea (cf. 10:46). The Pentecostal theology that tongues are the necessary sign of the gift of the Spirit is an overstatement of the evidence. Most of the conversions in the Book of Acts are described without any mention of such phenomena (the usual language of Luke is "they believed", see comment on 13:12). In all three cases where tongues-speaking occurred (2:1-4; 10:46; 19:6), there is no suggestion but that the phenomena came as a complete surprise, both to those who experienced it as well as to those who observed it. At no time does Luke suggest that such phenomena is to be expected, and certainly it was never coached.

Ephesian synagogue, spending three months there (19:8). Eventually, his welcome wore thin, and opposition to the Christian message drove him to find space in a more neutral location, a lecture hall, where for two whole years he taught the Christian gospel (19:10a).[117] If he was occupied in the midday with his preaching and teaching, as the Western Text indicates, Paul apparently supported himself by his tent-making trade in the early morning and evenings (cf. 20:34-35). Ephesus became an evangelistic center from which the gospel was taken to the outlying cities and villages of Asia (19:10b). It is likely that the Colossian church was established during this extended time of evangelism by one of Paul's co-workers, Epaphras (Col. 1:3-8), and possibly also congregations at Hierapolis and Laodecia (cf. Col. 4:13). In any case, the Colossian Christians do not seem to have known Paul personally (cf. Col. 2:1), though they maintained an interest in his affairs (cf. Col. 4:7-8).

EPHESUS, ASIA

Ephesus, a port city of the Roman Province of Asia, lay upstream from where the Cayster River entered the Agean Sea. In the time of Paul, it was the chief commercial center for western Asia Minor, and in addition to its sea access, it lay at the intersection of two major overland routes, the coastal road running north toward Smyna and Pergamum and the interior route to Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodecia. Like other Greco-Roman cities, Ephesus featured an agora, various temples (of which the most important was the shrine to Artemis, the patron deity of the city), public baths and latrines, fountains, a gymnasium, a library, a stadium and a theater. The main street, the Arkadiane, was a marble thoroughfare running from the theater to the harbor and flanked by a colonnade.

In addition to the more sophisticated features of the city, Ephesus also boasted an arena for gladiatorial contests and animal baiting. Perhaps Paul alludes to this when he says he "fought with beasts at Ephesus" (cf. 1 Co. 15:32), though as a Roman citizen, his language was metaphorical only.

G. Borchert, *ISBE*

During his time in Ephesus, unusual healing miracles and exorcisms accompanied Paul's ministry when sweat-rags and aprons[118] were carried off by admirers and brought to the sick (19:11-12). There is no indication that Paul endorsed this practice, but on the other hand, Luke records that people were cured in the

[117] The Western Text indicates that Paul used the Tyrannus' lecture hall between 11:00 AM and 4 PM, that is, during the time when the normal students went home in the hottest part of the day. While the addition is not widely represented in ancient manuscripts, it may well preserve an authentic oral tradition, cf. Metzger, p. 470.

[118] The σουδαριον is a facial cloth for wiping perspiration, while the σιμικινθιον refers to either a workman's apron or a bandage or perhaps even underwear (i.e., something that had touched the missionary's skin), cf. *BAG* (1979), p. 751, 759; Moulton and Milligan, p. 575.

process. Some interpreters suggest that Paul was perceived to be a magician, a type of the Hellenistic *theioi andres* (= divine man) who wandered throughout the provinces allegedly performing exorcisms and healings.[119] The superstitious use of the name Jesus by the Jewish exorcists may have been the result of a similar perception, though in this case it was highly unsuccessful (19:13-16). An early magical papyrus with the incantation "I adjure you by Jesus the god of the Hebrews" testifies to such superstition.[120] In this case, those attempting to use the name of Jesus as a talisman were severely beaten by the demoniac, and when their failure was publicized, many listeners among both Jews and Greeks suddenly began to treat the name of Jesus with deep respect (19:17). Those who had confessed faith in Christ were convicted of their paganism, and they now openly confessed their former participation in the magic arts and collected their highly-valued sorcery scrolls for burning (19:18-19). This demonstration of genuine repentance and faith helped the Christian message spread even more (19:20).

The Corinthian Letters

Paul stayed in Ephesus for more than two years (cf. 20:31), probably from sometime in late AD 52 to sometime in early AD 55. A number of indications suggest that he composed the Corinthian correspondence during this time. Certainly he was in Ephesus when he wrote 1 Corinthians, because he specifically mentions that his ministry in Ephesus had great potential (cf. 1 Co. 16:8). Also, in his final greetings, he sends salutations from the Christians in Asia, and especially, from Priscilla and Aquila (cf. 1 Co. 16:19), who had taken up residence in Ephesus during Paul's 2nd tour (cf. 18:19). When Paul sent Timothy to Corinth, it may be that Timothy carried 1 Corinthians with him (cf. 1 Co. 4:17), though doubt about this possibility arises from Paul's later language (cf. 1 Co. 16:10). Perhaps Timothy left earlier, and he may have been the courier of an earlier letter Paul wrote, one that is no longer extant (cf. 1 Co. 5:9-11). In any case, it is clear that there was communication between the Christians in Corinth and Paul in Ephesus (cf. 1 Co. 1:11; 16:17-18), and further, that the Corinthians had sent a letter to Paul posing certain questions to him, which he answered in 1 Corinthians (cf. 1 Co. 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12).

The provenance of 2 Corinthians is less clear, and the various critical introductions address the possibility that our 2 Corinthians might be a composite of

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[119] L. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), pp. 29-30. One of the most well-known of these types was Apollonios from Cappadocia, cf. D. Cartlidge and D. Dungan, "The Life of Apollonios of Tyana," *Documents for the Study of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), pp. 205ff.

[120] This line appears in the Paris magical papyrus, No. 574, line 3018-3019, cf. K. Preisendanz, ed., *Papyri graecae magicae*, 2 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1928-31).

more than one letter, and hence, written from more than one location.[121] Also, there may even be yet another Corinthian letter (no longer extant) that was written to the Corinthians between 1 and 2 Corinthians (cf. 2 Co. 2:3-4). There is nothing internally in 2 Corinthians that marks it as being from Ephesus or any other certain location, and most scholars reconstruct Paul's movements from Acts and 2 Corinthians in such a way that he probably sent the letter(s) from Macedonia.

The Riot in Ephesus

Near the end of his three years at Ephesus (cf. 20:31), Paul decided to return to Jerusalem by way of Macedonia and Achaia with the further goal of eventually going to Rome (19:21; Ro. 15:28).[122] His purpose for going to Jerusalem by this circuitous route can be gleaned from his letters, for he intended to collect relief funds for Jerusalem's Jewish Christians from the Gentile churches in Macedonia and Achaia (24:17; cf. 1 Co. 16:1-7; 2 Co. 8-9; Ro. 15:25-28). In anticipation of this trip, he sent two of his co-workers ahead to Macedonia, Timothy of Lystra and Erastus of Corinth (19:22). Shortly, Paul modified this plan and informed the Corinthians that he would visit them first, then go to Macedonia, and then return to Corinth before sailing for Jerusalem (2 Co. 1:15-16). The modified plan failed also, since trouble in the Corinthian church made it necessary for Paul to make an emergency visit, which he did. It was, in his own words, a "painful visit" (2 Co. 2:1), for while in Corinth a member of the church defied him face to face. Only after leaving Corinth in humiliation and composing a stinging letter of discipline carried by Titus was the matter set right (2 Co. 2:3-11). Thus, Paul returned to Ephesus in great distress, not knowing the outcome of what would happen in Corinth (cf. 2 Co. 1:8-9).[123]

In addition to the troubles with the Corinthians, a new issue arose in Ephesus. Artisans who made silver images of the patron goddess Artemis were losing business because of too many Christian conversions (19:23-27). The magnificent temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, was the most sacrosanct shrine in the eastern Mediterranean, [124] and Paul's insistence that "man-made gods are no gods at all" was a direct attack on the prestige of the goddess (cf. 1 Co. 8:4-6;

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[121] For a summary of these views, see R. Fuller, *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament* (London: Duckworth, 1974), pp. 46-50.

[122] Paul's intention to go to Rome as a bridge to Spain was driven by his desire to evangelize in areas where the Christian message had not yet reached (Ro. 15:20). He felt that his pioneering work was complete in the eastern part of the empire (Ro. 15:19, 23).

[123] This reconstruction of Paul's closing months in Ephesus follows F. Bruce, *Paul*, pp. 273-275.

[124] The temple was large, measuring some 400 by 200 feet. Artemis, the Earth-Mother and goddess of fertility, was believed to have been born near Ephesus, and pilgrims came to worship at her shrine in great numbers. A great stone, possibly a meteor, had fallen at Ephesus and was used to construct a statue of the goddess, cf. W. LaSor, *ISBE* (1979), I.307; G. Borchert, *ISBE* (1982), II.117.

10:19-21). Demetrius led the silversmiths' guild in a mass protest against Paul, and soon the whole city came boiling into the amphitheater amidst frenzied shouting (19:28-29). Two of Paul's companions were seized, Gaius of Derbe and Aristarchus of Thessalonica (cf. 20:4). Paul, since he knew the riot was largely concerning him, wanted to address the demonstrators, but cooler heads prevailed (19:30-31).

The mob in the amphitheater, as is often the case with mobs, had no clear objective. Their protest against Paul was as much a protest against Jews in general, since the Jewish faith was as much monotheistic as the Christian gospel. The Jews from the synagogue tried to defuse any recriminations coming their way by pushing to the front a spokesman, Alexander,[125] but when the crowd saw he was a Jew, they took up the frenzied chant lauding Artemis for another two hours (19:32-34).

Finally, the town clerk managed to quiet the mob, reasoning with them that their patron goddess was in no real danger and warning them that their rash conduct might have a backlash from the Roman authorities (19:35-41).[126] If Demetrius and his guild members had any formal charges, they could present them either before the proconsular assizes (if a private lawsuit) or the regular assembly of the city (if more than a private issue).[127] Once again, Luke's apologetic for the Christians is evident in the conclusion of the Town Clerk: "These men...have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess" (19:37). If a formal investigation were held, no legitimate defense for the riot could be offered (19:40).

Back to Macedonia and Greece

After this near escape, Paul deemed it best to leave Ephesus immediately (20:1). If the scenario described in 2 Corinthians is related to this departure, Paul was still in great distress over the situation in Corinth. So distraught was he waiting for the results of Titus' visit that he stopped in the port of Troas on the way to Macedonia, hoping to intercept Titus if he should be crossing the Aegean from Corinth (cf. 2 Co. 2:12-13). After a short stay but no appearance of Titus, Paul continued on to Macedonia, still in great inner turmoil (cf. 2 Co. 7:5). In Macedonia, Titus finally connected with Paul and brought the best possible news! The Corinthians were chastened and ready to renew their fellowship with him (2 Co. 7:6-16). How long Paul remained in Macedonia is not stated, though some suggest that

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[125] Whether the Alexander mentioned here is the same as mentioned elsewhere in Paul's letters is uncertain (cf. 1 Ti. 1:20; 2 Ti. 4:14).

[126] The Clerk of the People in Ephesus was the highest elected official and served as the city manager. From another similar incident recorded about riots some decades later, almost the same sentiment was spoken by the Town Clerk Dio of Prusa, who warned his fellow citizens, "We are in danger of being blamed for today's uproar, for which there is no excuse. These riots will be reported to the proconsul. Nothing that goes on in the cities escapes the notice of the governors," cf. Sherwin-White, pp. 83-84.

[127] Sherwin-White, p. 83.

perhaps it was during this period that he visited Illyricum (cf. Ro. 15:19). If so, his stay may have been lengthy, perhaps a year or more. He could reach Illyricum by the Via Egnatia which traversed the interior.

After visiting the Macedonian churches, Paul continued southward into Greece, where he stayed for three months, almost certainly at Corinth and probably during the winter when travel was curtailed (20:2-3a).

The Roman Letter

Most scholars agree that Paul wrote his Letter to the Romans during the three months he stayed at Corinth. Several factors converge to support this conclusion. We know that Paul's bigger plan at the time was to reach the unevangelized region of the western empire (19:21; Ro. 15:19-20, 23-24, 28). We also know that in his greetings to the Roman Christians, Paul mentions Phoebe from Cenchrea, the port of Corinth, and presumably she was the courier of the Roman letter (Ro. 16:1). The mention of Gaius, also, confirms Corinth as the place of composition (cf. Ro. 16:23; 1 Co. 1:14) as does the mention of Erastus (Ro. 16:23).[128]

Finally, we know that Paul's collection of funds for the poor in Jerusalem was nearly complete (Ro. 15:25-28). Earlier, in the Corinthian letters, this collection was still in process (cf. 1 Co. 16:1-4; 2 Co. 8-9).

Back to Asia

While in Corinth, yet another plot developed against Paul, this time from the Corinthian Jews, and it came to a head just as he was about to sail for Syria (20:3b). It will be remembered that his Jewish detractors had dragged him before the proconsul during his second missions tour (cf. 18:12ff.), and now they intended to renew their hostilities. If it is correct to surmise that Paul's travel plans to the east were in the spring of the year, his trip would coincide with the pilgrimages of the many Jews who also were traveling eastward for the festival of Pentecost, the most widely attended of the Jewish annual festivals. Isolation on a boat with hostile enemies was not an attractive option, so Paul changed his plans and decided to go overland back through Macedonia (20:3c). Luke includes a list of Paul's entourage, who preceded him across the Agean to Troas (20:4-5). Paul remained in Philippi during the observance of the festival of Unleavened Bread. When he sailed from Philippi to Troas, Luke once more joined the apostle as is evident by his resumption of the first person pronoun (20:6).[129]

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[128] See footnote #93.

[129] The voyage eastward took five days, while the voyage in the opposite direction had taken only two (cf. 16:11). Presumably, the wind was now against them.

On Sunday, they all came together to "break bread," an expression that most scholars agree refers to the eucharistic celebration of the last supper (20:7a; cf. 2:42; 1 Co. 10:16; 11:23ff.).[130] This is the first unambiguous reference about Christian worship on Sunday, though Sunday was firmly established as the Christian holy day by the time of the post-apostolic church.[131] Presumably, the service began at sundown, similar to the Jewish Sabbath, and since Paul intended to leave the next day, he continued his teaching at length (20:7b).[132] Also, evening meetings (or very early morning meetings) were more-or-less required, since the Roman Empire did not enjoy the much more recent convention of a "week-end". Every day was a work day. One young man, probably tired from his day's work and overcome with drowsiness, nodded off during Paul's speech and fell out the open window from the third floor (20:8-9). Perhaps Luke, being a physician, was the one who satisfied himself that the boy was dead. Nevertheless, Paul hugged the boy, and he revived (20:10), after which they all resumed the meeting (20:11-12).

From Troas, Paul went by land to Assos, a day's walk to the south, while the other missionaries took a slightly longer route by sailing around the point by ship (20:13). Luke offers no explanation as to why Paul wanted to separate from the others and travel by foot. Perhaps he felt he needed the time alone. From Assos, they all sailed together the 44 miles to Mitylene, the main town on the island of Lesbos (20:14), and from there they passed the island of Chios, touched at the island of Samos, and debarked at Miletus about 30 miles south of Ephesus (20:15). Paul did not intend to go to Ephesus at this time, because he was intent on reaching Jerusalem by the festival of Pentecost (20:16). Nevertheless, since the ship was to dock at Miletus for a few days, possibly for loading, unloading or even minor repairs, there was time to send word to the Ephesian church elders to meet with Paul before he continued his trip (20:17).

When the leaders of the Ephesian church arrived, Paul gave what is our only record of a speech he offered to Christians. Luke was there to record it, since the speech is sandwiched between the "we" passages (cf. 20:15; 21:1). Paul's address is at once a combination of autobiography, exhortation, apologetic and warning. He reminded them of his ministry in Ephesus, his hardships, and the burden of his message about repentance, faith and God's grace (20:18-21, 24b; cf. 2 Co. 1:8-11). His present intense desire to go to Jerusalem he credited to the urging of the Holy Spirit, though he frankly conceded that he also was warned by the Spirit that he

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[130] R. Martin, *Worship in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), pp. 79, 130.

[131] By the early 2nd century, for instance, Ignatius (died c. AD 110) could write that Christians were "no longer observing Sabbaths but fashioning their lives after the Lord's day, on which our life also arose through Him and through His death...", *Magnesians* 9.

[132] In 20:9, Luke uses the verb διαλογιζομαι (= to lecture, discuss).

would face prison and hardship (20:22-24). The way in which the Holy Spirit communicated this information to him is unknown, whether by private revelation or, as would happen later, by the prophetic word of others (cf. 21:4, 10-11). Nevertheless, Paul seemed to have a sense of the danger that awaited him from the Jewish constituency in Jerusalem (cf. Ro. 15:31).

Paul was quite convinced that he would never visit Asia again (20:25). He believed his ministry there to be complete (20:26-27). So, he urged the leaders to fulfill their role as sound leaders of God's community, [133] a community he had bought with the blood of his own Son (20:28).[134] The future would not be without trouble, for Paul sensed the probability of power-struggles among rival leaders (20:29-30).[135] He used himself as the example of what a godly leader should be like (20:31).

His exhortation concluded with a final charge of commitment and a reminder that he had not taken advantage of his status as a leader to promote himself (20:32-35). The character of the Christian message was gracious, self-sacrificial and oriented toward servanthood. With a parting prayer, embraces and tears, they escorted Paul to the ship (20:36-38).

On to Jerusalem

From Miletus, the ship carrying Paul and his friends touched at the islands of Cos and Rhodes (21:1). They debarked at Patara on the mainland and transferred to a ship bound straight for Tyre on the Phoenician coast (21:2-3). It was no doubt a moment of serendipity to find at Tyre a group of Christians, and they spent a week with them. While there, the Holy Spirit spoke through these believers about Paul's impending danger in Jerusalem, and they urged him to change his plans (21:4). Paul would not be deterred, however. Warnings about danger notwithstanding, Paul did not construe such prophetic messages as forbidding his trip, but rather, as confirmation of what he should expect when he arrived in Jerusalem. So, after prayer, the group boarded the ship again, this time calling a few miles down the coast at Ptolemais, where they found some other Christians (21:5-7). After another day, the ship put in at Caesarea, where the missionaries stayed with Philip the evangelist, one of the original seven deacons appointed by the Jerusalem church (21:8; cf. 6:3-6). Here, again, Paul encountered prophets who warned him about his upcoming

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[133] The terms ποιμαινω (= to shepherd, tend a flock) and επισκοπος(= bishop, overseer) seem to be used more-or-less interchangeably, though later, in the post-apostolic church, the terms "pastor" and "bishop" would acquire more of a hierarchical nuance.

[134] The Greek phrase δια του αιματος του ιδιου (= through the blood of his own one) is idiomatic in Koine Greek as a term of endearment to near relations, cf. Bruce, *Acts*, p. 416.

[135] Perhaps Paul is thinking of Zechariah's apocalyptic vision about the two shepherds, the good shepherd and the worthless shepherd (Zec. 11). Certainly Paul's prediction came true, as is evident in later New Testament documents concerning Ephesus (cf. 1 Ti. 1:3-7, 19-20; 4; 2 Ti. 1:15; 2:17-18; 3:1-9; Rv. 2:4-5).

hardship at Jerusalem (21:9-11),[136] and as before, the believers took this to mean that God was warning Paul to stay away from Jerusalem (21:12). Paul, however, took the warning in quite a different way, and in spite of their pleas, insisted that he was determined to go on (21:13-14).[137] Clearly, he understood that his trip to Jerusalem, however dangerous, was directed by the Holy Spirit just as much as the warnings that he would face difficulty when he arrived (cf. 20:22). The remainder of the trip was overland, and some of the believers from Caesarea accompanied the group, bringing them to the home of a Cypriot believer named Mnason, perhaps a rest stop somewhere about halfway.[138] Finally in Jerusalem, the group was warmly received (21:15-17).[139] Presumably, Paul arrived in time to celebrate the festival of Pentecost, as he had hoped.

Arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21:18-23:22)

Though Paul did not know it, his return to Jerusalem for Pentecost, probably in May AD 57, marked the end of his formal missionary work. Certainly he knew that his trip to Jerusalem would precipitate a crisis (20:23-24; 21:4, 10-14), but the outcome of this crisis was unclear to him (20:22). Nevertheless, he felt compelled to go. Part of this urgency was his concern to deliver the relief fund from the Gentile churches to the Jerusalem church for distribution to the poor (cf. 1 Co. 16:1-7; 2 Co. 8-9; Ro. 15:25-28). It seems likely that Paul did not want to delegate this gift to others, though of course representatives from the Gentile churches accompanied him to Jerusalem. Still, since already there was tension over the role of the Torah between the Judaizing faction from Jerusalem and the Gentile churches Paul had started, the monetary gift from the Gentiles would go a long way toward mitigating this tension. Undoubtedly, Paul wanted to see the project to its end.

The Arrest

Luke does not at this time describe the offering of the relief fund to the Jerusalem leaders, though he will mention it later (cf. 24:17). When Paul wrote to the Romans, apparently he was not entirely certain that the gift would even be accepted (cf. Ro. 15:31), but Luke, by his statement that the Jerusalem delegation received the

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[136] Eusebius tells us that Philip and his daughters eventually moved to Hierapolis, Asia, cf. *Ecclesiastical History*, III.9.

[137] The words of the group about Paul's determination, "The Lord's will be done" (21:14), is a deliberate echo of Jesus' prayer in Gethsemene.

[138] So reads the Western Text, which includes the expansion "...and when we arrived at a certain village, we stayed with Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple. And when we had departed thence, we came to Jerusalem", cf. Metzger, p. 482.

[139] The expression "made ready" may denote the hiring of horses, cf. Neil, p. 217. The trip was about 65 miles.

missionaries warmly (21:17), implies that it was accepted. After reporting to James, the leader of the Jerusalem church,[140] along with the other elders concerning the Gentile missions tours, the Jerusalem leaders reciprocated by telling Paul and his company about the many thousands of Jewish-Christian believers now in Jerusalem (21:18-20a). These believers, though Christian, had in no way renounced their Jewish heritage, but were careful observers of the Torah (21:20b). Earlier, Luke noted that some of the Christians were still practicing Pharisees (cf. 15:5). This circumstance, then, is the obverse side of the issue addressed at the council some years earlier. If Gentiles were not required to become Jews in order to become Christians, then it was equally true that Jews who became Christians were not required to abandon the Torah or their Jewish customs.[141]

The enthusiasm of the Jewish Christians for Torah observance raised a delicate point, however. Rumor had it that Paul was teaching the Diaspora Jews to abandon the Torah (21:21). Such gossip was blatantly false. Paul had required Timothy, whose mother was Jewish, to be circumcised (cf. 16:1-3), and he himself had taken a Nazarite vow in Greece (cf. 18:18). He had defended the Jewish custom of veiling for women at Corinth (cf. 1 Co. 11:2-16). His eagerness to be in Jerusalem for the celebration of Pentecost was in itself a testimony to his Jewish loyalties (cf. 20:16). Paul only required that circumcision and Torah observance not be viewed as a means to salvation (cf. Ga. 2:15-16; 3:10-14; Ro. 3:20-26), and in this the Jerusalem church concurred (cf. Ac. 15:8-11). Nevertheless, the rumor had to be faced. To dispel such suspicions, the Jerusalem elders advised Paul to accompany four of the brothers to the temple who were under Jewish vows, presumably temporary Nazarite vows, since the vows involved shaving their heads. Paul was to pay their expenses for the *'olah, minha, shelamim* and the *hatt'at*, the four required offerings (21:22-24; cf. Nu. 6:13-21; Lv. 1-4).[142] They were careful to assure Paul that such an action would in no way jeopardize the encyclical letter already sent to the Gentile churches (21:25), and in any case, Paul was always eager to work for harmony. To the Corinthians he had written, "To the Jews I became like a Jew...to those under the Torah I became like

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[140] It is apparent by this time that James, the brother of the Lord, is the primary leader in Jerusalem. He and the other brothers of Jesus were closely associated with the disciples early on (Ac. 1:14), and Jesus made a post-resurrection appearance to James (1 Co. 15:7). By the time of Paul's conversion, James already had risen to prominence in the Jerusalem church (Ac. 12:17), and later, we know that he had a significant impact upon Paul (Ga. 1:18-19; 2:9, 12). He also gave the final summation at the first council (Ac. 15:13ff.). While the other brothers of Jesus did some itinerant missionary work (1 Co. 9:5), James stayed in Jerusalem, which is independently verified by Josephus, who describes James' martyrdom there, cf. *Antiquities*. XX.9.1. Eusebius adds that James took a Nazarite vow for life, cf. *Ecclesiastical History*, II.23.5.

[141] Of course, confessing Christ as the Messiah would necessitate certain changes for Jews. For one thing, temple sacrifice for the expiation of sin was no longer appropriate. Still, the moral imperatives of the Torah and the regulation of life by the holiness codes remained important.

[142] This consummation of the Nazarite vow was the same thing Paul had completed at the end of his second missions trip, cf. Ac. 18:18, footnote 100.

one under the Torah" (1 Co. 9:20).

Entry into the sacred temple precincts required preliminary purification, since Paul had been traveling among Gentiles. Such travel was considered a defilement that would prevent him from passing beyond the Court of the Nations (21:26).[143] During the purification week, however, Paul was recognized in the temple precincts by some traveling Jews from Asia, probably Ephesus, and they immediately seized him as a violator and disclaimer of the Torah (21:27-29). They accused him of bringing Trophimus, an Ephesian Greek, into the temple, thus defiling the holy grounds.[144] Though the accusation was false, the tempers of the Jewish worshippers flamed into violence.[145] They dragged Paul from the inner court into the outer court,[146] and if word had not reached the Romans that a riot was in progress, they would have lynched him on the spot (21:30-32). Immediately contiguous to the outer temple court was the Antonia Fortress with steps descending directly into the temple courtyard. Down these steps poured at least a couple hundred soldiers to arrest Paul, and by doing so, to save him from death.[147] Paul was chained, probably to the wrists of two soldiers, and interrogated on the spot, but the din was so loud and confusing that the Roman tribune[148] had no choice but to take Paul into the fortress (21:33-34). Pressing their way through the mass, the soldiers carried Paul to the steps with difficulty (21:35-36).

Defense to the Jews

In the course of the next several chapters, which occupies more than two years, Paul will offer five defenses of himself, one to the Jews, one to the Sanhedrin, one to Felix, one to Festus and one to Agrippa. The first of these defenses occurs here on the steps leading upward into the Antonia Fortress. Paul surprised the tribune by his knowledge of Greek. The officer had supposed him to be a known messianic pretender, who three years earlier had appeared in Jerusalem, claiming to be a

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[143] *m. Oholoth* 2:3, cf. Fitzmyer, p. 695.

[144] While Gentiles were free to visit the outer court of the temple (Court of the Nations), they were strictly forbidden to go further. Violation was a capital crime, and notices in Greek and Latin were displayed on a barrier to warn visitors that the penalty for violation was death, cf. Josephus, *Wars*, V.5.2 and *Antiquities*, XV.11.5. Two of these notices, both in Greek, have been uncovered by archaeologists, and the text reads: "No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the temple and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death," cf. Bruce, *Acts*, 434.

[145] The extreme Jewish sensitivity to this issue is quite understandable given the recent history of temple violations by pagans such as Pilate and Gaius, cf. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, pp. 174-

[146] The expression "from the temple" probably means from the inner courts, whose gates were immediately closed to keep the hubbub outside the sacred precincts.

[147] The Greek text of 21:32 uses the plural form of centurion, an officer over 100 soldiers.

[148] Luke uses the term *chiliarchos* (= miltiary tribune), a commander of about 600 soldiers and roughly equivalent to a major or a colonel, cf. *BAG* (1979) pp. 881-882.

prophet, and had led a huge group to the Mt. of Olives to watch the walls of Jerusalem fall down at his command. Though the Romans killed four hundred of the zealots and arrested another two hundred, the Egyptian escaped.[149] That Paul was a Roman citizen from Tarsus convinced the tribune to allow him a speech to the Jews milling in the courtyard below (21:37-40a).

Motioning to the crowd, Paul addressed them in Aramaic (21:40b-22:1-2). He recounted his upbringing as a Diaspora Jew of Tarsus, Cilicia who was reared in Jerusalem, studying under Gamaliel, the famous rabbi (22:3). His enthusiasm for Torah intensification was as ardent as that of his listeners, and it extended even to his role as the inquisitor of Christians (22:4). It was on a trip to Damascus to extradite Christians that he was confronted by a blinding light and a divine voice which, to his shock, identified itself as belonging to Jesus of Nazareth, the very messianic leader he was opposing (22:5-8). In Damascus, he was healed of blindness and baptized by a Torah-observing Jew who also had become a Christian (22:9-16). Back in Jerusalem, he experienced a trance while praying in this same temple, and he saw a vision of Jesus who commissioned him to leave Jerusalem and evangelize the pagans (22:17-21).

The crowd listened attentively to Paul's speech until he reached the part about his divine commission to the pagans, at which they protested vehemently (22:22-23). The tribune then withdrew Paul into the Antonia Fortress, ordering him to be whipped with the *flagellum*, the standard method for extracting information from aliens and slaves. Paul, however, protested on the grounds of his Roman citizenship, since citizens were exempt from this type of torture (22:24-25).[150] When the tribune discovered that Paul was a Roman citizen, the situation for Paul changed immediately (22:26-29). The procedure for treating a Roman citizen was clearly defined by Roman law, and the tribune could not afford to violate it.

Defense to the Sanhedrin

Since Paul's accusers were Jewish and the matter had to do with Jewish law, the tribune called for a hearing by the Jewish ruling body, the Sanhedrin (22:30).[151] Once again Paul had the opportunity to present his case. Though Paul had worked for the Sanhedrin many years earlier, when he was arresting Christians, the leadership

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[149] Josephus, *Antiquities*, XX.8.6 and *Wars*, II.13.5.

[150] See footnote 67 and the comments on 16:35-37.

[151] The Sanhedrin, composed of seventy elders and the high priest, had power over the spiritual, political and legal affairs of all Jews, though this authority varied considerably depending on the permission granted by the occupational government. They met in the "Hall of Hewn Stone" on the western boundary of the Temple Mount near the Roman gymnasium, cf. G. Twelftree, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. J. Green et al. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1992), pp. 728-732.

and members of the body doubtless had changed since that time. Thus, when Paul commenced by claiming to have fulfilled his duty to God in good conscience and was peremptorily struck a back-handed blow on order of the high priest (23:1-2), he boldly retorted that the perpetrator was like the false prophets of Ezekiel's day (23:3; cf. Eze. 13:10-16).[152] Such a callous order was itself a violation of the Torah! It is likely that Paul had never seen this high priest before, since he had taken office only in AD 47 or 48, while Paul was absent from Jerusalem (23:4-5).[153]

Given his intimate knowledge of the Sanhedrin's membership composed of both Pharisees and Sadducees, Paul suddenly announced his loyalty to the sect of the Pharisees and that this whole examination was based on his Pharisaic belief in bodily resurrection (23:6).[154] If Paul claimed to have been confronted by Jesus of Nazareth (cf. 22:7-8), perhaps it was Jesus' spirit or his angel who made such an appearance (23:7-9; cf. 12:15).[155] Paul's claim, of course, ignited an old debate, dividing the Sanhedrin against itself, which is exactly what he must have intended. Once again, the tribune was compelled to use troops to pull Paul from the midst of the violent agitation (23:10). The following night, Paul, who had witnessed so courageously to the Jews about Jesus' appearance to him on the Damascus Road, was favored by yet another confrontation with the Lord. Christ stood by him and promised that his testimony would be heard in Rome as well (23:11)![156] Here, then, is the confirmation that Paul's determination to go to Jerusalem, in spite of repeated prophetic urgings to stay away (cf. 20:23; 21:4, 10-14), was well-founded. It also confirms Paul's advice to the Corinthians that prophetic utterances must be evaluated (1 Co. 14:29).

So great was the Jews' hatred of Paul that a group of them took oath to end his life by assassination (23:12-15). The plot was discovered, however, by Paul's nephew,[157] and through him the tribune was informed (23:16-22).

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[152] The back-handed blow was the symbol of blasphemy, cf. J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, trans. J. Bowden (New York: Scribners, 1971), pp. 239-240.

[153] Ananus (Ananias), according to Josephus, was a bold and insolent man, a Sadducee, and very harsh in his judgments, cf. *Antiquities*, XX.10.1. It might be assumed that Paul should have recognized him by his position if not by face, but perhaps Paul was not facing him, or, perhaps Paul's statement was intended as a sarcasm, i.e., "I didn't think someone like him could possibly be the high priest."

[154] In the gospels, a major difference is noted between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The former believed in the resurrection of the dead while the latter denied it, cf. Mt. 22:23//Mk. 12:18//Lk. 20:27. Josephus offers an independent verification of this difference, cf. *Antiquities* XVIII.1.3 and *Wars* II.8.14.

[155] In later Jewish thought (which might have roots as early as the first century), guardian angels were believed to be spiritual doubles, cf. Marshall, p. 210.

[156] More than likely this was a visionary experience, such as had happened earlier (cf. 18:9; 22:17).

[157] Though the reference is intriguing, nothing more is known of Paul's sister and her family.

Incarceration at Caesarea (Acts 23:23-26:32)

The assassination plot against Paul, foiled by his sister and nephew, spurred the Roman tribune to arrange for Paul's removal to Caesarea, the city built by Herod and named in honor of Augustus.[158] Caesarea was the Roman provincial seat of government for Palestine. Moving Paul there would accomplish several ends: the prisoner, who was a Roman citizen, would be safe; the assassins would be stymied since they could hardly break into a fortification like Caesarea, regardless of their determination; and, any danger of further rioting over Paul would be stifled. Two centurions with their regiments were mustered for protective custody on the trip, a reasonable force considering the fanaticism of the Jewish zealots (23:23-24). A letter[159] explaining the circumstances was composed by the tribune for Felix, the Roman procurator (23:25-30).[160] In his communique, the tribune judiciously omitted that he had not discovered Paul's citizenship until after he had ordered him scourged. The trip was conducted at night, both for expediency and the safety of darkness. At some point midway, the infantry returned to Jerusalem while Paul continued on to Casearea with the cavalry (23:31-35).

Defense to Felix

It was five days before the Sanhedrin could arrange to make the trip to Caesarea and present their case. Ananias the high priest, some of the other members of the ruling council, and a legal advocate named Tertullus finally arrived to put forth a formal charge against Paul (24:1). The flattery in Tertullus' introduction is obvious (24:2-4),[161] and the accusation against Paul was that he incited riots world-wide and committed temple desecration (24:5-9).[162] Both charges were capital offenses. Claudius had expelled the Jews from Rome because of riots (cf. 18:2),[163] and he had composed a letter to the citizens of Alexandria, Egypt to be on their guard against Jews from Syria who were apt to cause riots.[164] Felix likely was aware of such

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[158] The name "Caesarea" derives from Caesar, and the harbor name "Sebastos" is the Greek form of Augustus.

[159] How Luke was privy to the contents of the letter is unclear. Perhaps he only estimates the approximate contents that would have been expected, or perhaps he heard it read at Paul's trial in Caesarea, cf. Neil, p. 231.

[160] Antonius Felix held the office of Procurator of Judea from AD 52 until about AD 58 or 59. Tacitus was hardly complimentary of Felix when he described him thus: "With all manner of cruelty and lust, he exercised the functions of a prince with the disposition of a slave," cf. *History*, v.9.

[161] There may be a grain of truth in the statement that Felix brought peace, but the testimonies of both Josephus and Tacitus dispel the notion that it was anything but a peace enforced by extreme cruelty.

[162] It is usually assumed that the expression "sect of the Nazarenes," which appears only here in the New Testament, refers to the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. Felix probably knew that Jesus had been executed as a revolutionary, and any loyalists to Jesus were bound to be viewed in the same way.

[163] Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, 25.4.

[164] H. Bell, *Jews and Christians in Egypt* (London: 1924), pp. 1ff. cited by Bruce, *Paul*, p.225.

warnings. In any case, Roman law protected against temple desecration for legal religions, and Judaism had legal status. Hence, Paul's accusers tried to marshal the most serious case they could construct.

CAESAREA MARITIMA

Herod the Great constructed Caesarea on the Palestinian coast a few miles south of Mt. Carmel. Since the central coast of Israel has no natural harbor, Herod constructed a port on the open sea by building two great stone breakwaters extending out about a third of a mile from the shore to enclose an artificial harbor. The breakwaters yielded a harbor about 3 ½ acres in size. The city itself, about 164 acres in size, included a palace, civil halls, an amphitheater, a hippodrome for athletic events, an elaborate aqueduct, a series of warehouse vaults, sea-flushed sewers and a defense wall. The Cardo Maximus, a thoroughfare almost a mile long lined with more than 700 columns and bordered by mosaics, led northward from the theater. As part of the breakwater system, huge blocks of hydraulic concrete were poured on the sea bottom weighing more than 50 tons each, while the entrance to the harbor was flanked by two enormous towers rising from the sea.

One of the most striking archaeological discoveries at Caesarea has been an inscribed stone, which reads, "Pontius Pilate, the Prefect of Judea, has dedicated to the people of Caesarea a temple in honor of Tiberius."

Robert Bull, "Caesarea Maritima: The Search for Herod's City" and Robert Hohlfelder, "Caesarea Beneath the Sea," *BAR* (May/June 1982).

It was normal at such a hearing for a Roman citizen to be allowed to answer the charges against him, and Felix motioned for Paul to do so.[165] As to the charge that he had come to Jerusalem to incite sedition, Paul responded that he had come to Jerusalem to worship. No one could show that he had engaged in agitation (24:10-13). However, Paul did admit to being a "follower of the Way,"[166] which earlier the Sanhedrin prosecutors had called a sect of the Nazarenes. At the same time, he pointedly affirmed his faith in the divine origin of the Torah and the Prophets, and especially, the Pharisaic belief in resurrection and final judgment (24:14-16). His trip to Jerusalem was charitable, a claim he could substantiate through reliable witnesses who knew of the relief fund he brought for the poor (24:17). In any case, the original

[165] Paul apparently was aware of the political tenures of Felix in Palestine-several years over Samaria and now several more years over all Judea.

[166] The reader first encounters the description of Christians as followers of "the Way" during Paul's pre-Christian years (cf. 9:2). Later, at Ephesus, the same terminology is used (cf. 19:9, 23), and again in Paul's defense before the crowd in the temple courtyard (cf. 22:4).

charge in Jerusalem was made by visiting Asian Jews who were not even part of the official prosecution now before Felix, an absence that Paul, no doubt, was happy to point out (24:18-19).[167] Those presently prosecuting him certainly were not eye-witnesses of any crime (24:20-21). The upshot of it all was that there was no case. The only charge that could be sustained was concerning Paul's belief in the resurrection of the dead, and many of those accusing him believed in resurrection as much as Paul.

At this point, Felix deferred anything further until the tribune from Jerusalem had arrived, since he was the only independent witness to the civil disturbance (24:22). As was customary for Roman citizens, Paul was allowed certain privileges while he awaited the continuation of the hearing (24:23). Felix, for his part, was well aware of the Christian movement.

After several days, Paul was summoned again before Felix, who came with his Jewish wife Drusilla. Boldly, Paul testified about faith in Christ and reasoned about moral issues and ultimate accountability before God. Small wonder that his discourse bothered Felix and Drusilla, since Felix had married three wives, and the third, Drusilla, had been cajoled into leaving her husband Azizus, king of Emesa, to marry him.[168] Though disturbed by Paul's emphatic call for a moral life,[169] Felix also hoped that Paul might be wealthy enough to bribe his way to freedom, so a cat-and-mouse game ensued that lasted two years (24:24-26). When Felix was recalled by the emperor Nero, probably in AD 58 or 59, he left Paul under indictment (24:27).

Defense to Festus

Porcius Festus, the replacement of Felix as procurator of Judea, began his tenure with an official visit to Jerusalem. Immediately, the charges against Paul were raised again, and the Sanhedrin members requested that the venue of the trial be moved back to Jerusalem, privately hoping that another assassination attempt could be engineered (25:1-3). Festus, however, was not so easily swayed, and he may have suspected treachery. At any rate, he required that the case continue at the provincial seat of Roman government in Caesarea (25:4-5). A week and a half later, he reconvened the trial, which followed much the same course as the earlier hearing. Though the Sanhedrin brought many accusations, they could not demonstrate the legitimacy of their charges (25:6-7). Once more, Paul, as a Roman citizen, was allowed to answer his prosecutors.

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[167] Roman law was very severe on accusers who abandoned their charges through *destitutio* (= desertion), cf. Sherwin-White, p. 52.

[168] Longenecker, p. 539.

[169] Paul's boldness to Felix reminds the reader of John the Baptist's boldness to Herod (cf. Mk. 6:17-20).

In his defense before Festus, once more Paul insisted that the case was empty. The charge of temple desecration and sedition against Rome was ludicrous (25:8). When Festus asked Paul publicly if he would be willing to return to Jerusalem to continue the trial, Paul invoked his Roman privilege to appear before Caesar himself![170] Such an appeal was comparable to a modern appeal to the Supreme Court. Paul plainly stated that he was a loyal citizen, and he did not shun execution if the charges proved to be true. On the other hand, he was not about to risk a return to Jerusalem where he knew with certainty that justice would not prevail. Festus, after conferring with his advisors, consented to deliver Paul to Rome (25:9-12).

In the meantime, Herod Agrippa II, the provincial king from Caesarea Philippi, arrived to pay a state visit to the new procurator. He came with his sister Bernice, who also was the older sister of Drusilla, the wife of the former procurator.[171] Festus was pleased to discuss his unusual case with his visitor, especially since the charges against the prisoner seemed to be religious rather than political (25:13-21). It was apparent to Festus that the real issue had nothing to do with the flimsy charges of sedition and desecration, but rather, with Paul's claim that Jesus was alive. What God had told Ananias many years before-that Paul would testify before the Gentiles and their kings-was surely being fulfilled (9:15; cf. Mk. 13:9)!

How Luke was able to reconstruct the conversation between Festus and Agrippa is unknown. Perhaps he was able to interview someone from the court.

Defense Before Herod Agrippa II

Agrippa was considered by the Romans to be an expert on Jewish affairs, so it is no surprise that he eagerly wanted to hear Paul in person (25:22). The hearing was conducted with great pomp before ranking officials of Caesarea as well as the procurator, King Agrippa and his entourage. After Festus had reviewed the circumstances briefly and stated that he needed to frame the charge against Paul before sending him to Caesar Nero, Agrippa invited Paul to speak (25:23-26:1).

This, the last of Paul's five defenses, is much like his speech from the stairs of the Antonia Fortress in Jerusalem (cf. 22:1-21). Once more he rehearsed his conversion and call on the Damascus Road. He prefaced his account by giving a sketch of his own background as a committed Pharisee (26:1-5). Like all Jews,[172] he eagerly looked toward the fulfillment of the prophetic promise of resurrection and the messianic hope (26:6-8). At first, he judged the Christian movement as did his

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[170] For a complete discussion of this Roman privilege, see Sherwin-White, pp. 57-70.

[171] Rumor had it that Agrippa II and Bernice were involved in an incestuous relationship, cf. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20.7.3 and Juvenal, *Satire*, 6.156-160.

[172] It is of interest that Paul refers to the entire twelve tribes of Israel. Apparently, he did not share any notion of the so-called "lost" ten tribes.

contemporaries from the Sanhedrin: it was a misguided messianic movement that was dangerous and heretical (26:9-11). What changed his mind was nothing short of a divine revelation from God in which he was personally confronted by the risen Christ and commissioned as a missionary (26:12-18).

Paul obeyed the divine commission from that time on. It was in service to this commission that he became the victim of the riot in Jerusalem. His message about the passion and resurrection of Jesus was nothing less than what was anticipated by Moses and the prophets (26:19-23).[173] Abruptly, Festus interrupted with the exclamation that Paul was mad, but Paul responded evenly that not only was he not insane, Agrippa who sat before him was acquainted only too well with the Jewish hope of resurrection, and Paul appealed directly to him (26:24-27). Agrippa, for his part, was content to be sarcastic (26:28-29).[174] The hearing was clearly at an end. The royal audience and officials arose to leave, but not before they were overheard to say that Paul was innocent of any capital crime (26:30-32). Once again, Luke has provided an apologetic for the Christian movement.

Voyage to Rome (Acts 27-28)

When Paul first told his friends that he intended to visit Rome (cf. 19:21), he had no inkling as to how this desire would be fulfilled. Repeatedly during the final trip to Jerusalem, he was informed by prophetic word that imprisonment awaited him there (cf. 20:23; 21:4, 11-14). On the second night following his arrest, Christ appeared to Paul, encouraging him and informing him that he would give his witness in Rome (cf. 23:11). Doubtless, these experiences figure in his eventual plea as a Roman citizen to request an imperial hearing (cf. 25:10-12, 21, 25; 26:32). At last, the long incarceration at Caesarea was complete, and Festus made the necessary preparations to extradite Paul to Rome. The closing two chapters of the Book of Acts narrate this trip.

The Sea Voyage and Shipwreck

Responsibility for the voyage from Palestine to Italy was assigned to a centurion named Julius, a member of the Augustan Cohort (27:1).[175] With an armed

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[173] In the Greek text, the phrases in 26:23 begin with the interrogative *ei* (= if) and probably should be connected in thought with the earlier question of Paul introduced by *ei*, "Why should any of you consider it incredible if God raises the dead" (26:8)? If so, then the force of Paul's argument is: "Why should any of you consider it incredible...if God raises the dead...if the Messiah should suffer...[or] if as the first to rise from the dead he would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles" (26:23).

[174] The KJV rendering, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," misses entirely the appropriate nuance.

[175] The Augustan Cohort seems to have been a special unit assigned to police duties and judicial functions, cf. Longenecker, p. 557-558.

guard, Paul along with other prisoners under extradition orders boarded a coastal ship bound for its home port of Adramyttium on the northwest coast of Mysia. Because Luke resumes the first person pronoun, it is apparent that he along with at least one other Christian were able to accompany Paul, since the vessel was not restricted to the military (27:2). The ship put in at Sidon in Phoenicia, and Paul, probably on the basis of his citizenship, was allowed visiting privileges with his Christian friends (27:3). From Phoenicia, they proceeded with some difficulty because the prevailing winds now were against them until they arrived at Myra, Lycia, nearly halfway between Cyprus and Crete (27:4-5). Here, they were compelled to change ships. (The original vessel presumably headed north up the coast of Asia Minor toward its home port.) On a ship from Alexandria, Egypt they continued toward Italy, still battling the prevailing winds (27:6-8). Due to their slow progress, they were quickly losing the advantage of the season when sea travel was relatively safe. The Jewish Yom Kippur (the "fast") was already behind them, so they were well into the fall, probably mid-October, when travel became decidedly more risky due to inclement weather.[176] Though Paul, a seasoned traveler, warned against proceeding further, the centurion and pilot were determined to press ahead so as to reach a better harbor for wintering in western Crete (27:9-12).

At first, this decision seemed to be the right one, for the winds changed in their favor. Shortly, however, a violent northeaster drove them out to sea, and the lifeboat, which normally was towed, was taken aboard. The ship itself was undergirded with ropes to make the planking of the hull more secure, and they let the anchor drag to slow them down and prevent them from reaching some dangerous sandbar (27:13-17). The extra baggage, eventually the cargo, and finally the mainyard were jettisoned to lighten the ship (27:18-20). By this time, most of the group had given up that they would survive, and Paul was not backward about telling them that he had warned of this very danger. Still, he encouraged them by saying that an angel of God had assured him he would survive to stand before Caesar's court, and though they would certainly run aground, their lives would be spared (27:21-26).

It was a long and tense two weeks before the sailors sensed they were nearing land, probably by listening to breakers on the rocks. By depth sounding, they ascertained that they were drawing closer to land, and fearing the rocks, they dropped four anchors, hoping to better assess their situation when it was morning. Some of the sailors intended to try to make it on their own in the dinghy, and Paul warned them that they must stay with the ship if they were to survive (27:27-32). Finally, just before daylight, Paul urged them to eat before landing. Reminiscent of Jesus, Paul gave thanks and broke bread before them all. The ship grounded on a sandbar in the

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[176] September 14 to November 11 was considered the dangerous season for travel, and after November 11, sea travel ceased altogether for the balance of the winter, cf. Vegetius, *De re militari*, iv.39 as cited in Bruce, *Paul*, p. 370.

small bay and began to break apart, but the entire company was able to make it to the beach. This was the fourth time Paul had endured a shipwreck (cf. 2 Co. 11:24). Fortunately for the other prisoners, Paul's favor with the officer became the reason the soldiers were not allowed to kill the prisoners to prevent their escape (27:33-44).

On to Rome

Shortly, they discovered that they were on the island of Malta, about 58 miles south of Sicily, where the native Maltese welcomed them with a fire. Paul surprised the natives by surviving an encounter with a snake, and later, he was instrumental in the healing of one of the island officials as well as various other sick folk (28:1-10). In all, it was three months before the group could safely put out to sea again. Once again, they boarded an Alexandrian grain ship (cf. 27:38) with the prow carved into the likenesses of the twin gods Castor and Pollux.[177] They put in at Syracuse, Sicily and eventually reached Puteoli, Italy, where they found some Christians who already had heard that Paul was en route to Rome. Other Christians from Rome,[178] probably on the basis of communications from the believers at Puteoli, came to meet the company and escort them into the city along the Via Appia. Upon reaching Rome, Paul was allowed the privilege of house arrest, which offered considerable more freedom than imprisonment (28:11-16).

Because he was under house arrest, Paul could not attend the local synagogue. Nevertheless, in keeping with his priority, he requested an audience with the members of the synagogue to explain his situation, but more importantly, to explain his belief in the messianic hope of Israel as fulfilled in Jesus (28:17-23). Arguing from the Torah and the Prophets, Paul urged them to accept the Christian message. The Jewish response to Paul was mixed. Some accepted the claim that Jesus was the long-awaited messiah, and others did not (28:24). Their rejection, as was true for Paul's other various missions endeavors, became the key to evangelism among the non-Jews (28:25-28). While he awaited his imperial hearing, Paul was able to boldly preach about Jesus to everyone who came to him while he was under house arrest (28:30-31).

Luke's conclusion to the Book of Acts, at first glance, seems abrupt. Even in the early church, this abruptness did not pass without notice, since the Western Text offers a concluding statement that is missing from other textual traditions: *...because*

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[177] In Greek mythology, Castor and Pollux were the twin sons of Zeus and Leda and were often identified with the constellation of Gemini. They were believed to be the patron deities of mariners, and Castor was depicted as a horseman, while Pollux was depicted as a boxer. The cult of the Dioscuri (a popular name for the twins) was prevalent in Egypt, so it is not too surprising to find an Alexandrian grain ship with the figurehead carved as the twin gods, cf. C. Blomberg, *ISBE* (1988) IV.930.

[178] It will be remembered that the Jews had been expelled from Rome by Claudius (cf. 18:2). However, upon the death of Claudius in AD 54, many of them were able to return.

this is the Messiah, Jesus the Son of God, by whom the whole world is to be judged.[179] However, what seems to be an unfinished conclusion may well be Luke's artful way of intentionally suggesting that the proclamation about Jesus would be ongoing until the consummation of the kingdom of God. The very last word in the Greek text of Acts is "unhindered"-a suggestive ending implying more than just the freedom of Paul to preach. The story that began in Galilee, proceeded to Samaria and Judea, and climaxed in Jerusalem with the passion of Jesus in the Third Gospel now had followed the reverse pattern in the Book of Acts. It went from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and now to the ends of the earth (cf. 1:8). Paul's arrival in Rome becomes a symbol of the gospel to the nations of which Rome was the capital. Paul stayed in Rome two years under house arrest until his imperial hearing. If the Philippian letter reflects on this period (see discussion below), which generally is to be assumed (cf. Phil. 1:7, 12-14), then Paul clearly regarded the outcome of his hearing to be a matter of life and death (Phil. 1:20; 2:17). He seems to have had hopes of acquittal (Phil. 1:19, 25; 2:24), though of course, nothing was certain (2:23). Luke does not tell us the result of the hearing, nor is there any definite information elsewhere.

The Prison Letters

Four of Paul's letters, Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians and Philippians, have been dubbed "prison letters," since in each of them Paul speaks of himself as a prisoner (Col. 4:3, 18; Phlm 10, 13, 22-23; Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Phil. 1:7, 13). Unfortunately, in none of these letters does Paul directly enlarge upon the circumstances of his imprisonment. We know that he spent two years imprisoned in Caesarea (24:27) and two years under house arrest in Rome (28:30). Clement, around the end of the first century, stated that Paul was imprisoned some seven times,[180] and Paul himself admits to being in prison "frequently" (2 Co. 11:23; cf. 6:5).

Based on the overlapping of the names of friends in Colossians and Philemon, it usually is assumed that these two prison letters were composed at about the same time (Col. 1:1, 7; 4:9-14, 17; Phlm 1-2, 10, 23). The circumstances for Philippians, however, seem quite different than for the former two letters. In Philippians, Paul has only one messenger, Timothy (Phil. 2:19-21), and one companion, Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25-30), unlike Colossians, where Paul mentions several associates. More to the point, the persons mentioned in Colossians and Philemon are absent in Philippians. Ephesians, for its part, contains only one name other than Paul's, Tychicus (Eph. 6:21-22), but strikingly, it is the same name as the courier of the Colossian letter (Col. 4:7-9). Thus, Ephesians may have been composed and sent at

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[179] Metzger, p. 503.

[180] 1 Clement 5.

the same time as Colossians and Philemon. Whether the prison letters were composed during Paul's incarceration in Caesarea or during his house arrest in Rome is unclear, though traditionally the latter option has been the most popular since the period of the post-apostolic church.

The Closing Years of Paul's Life

We know that when Paul was making his last trip to Jerusalem, even before his arrest, his long range desire was to preach the gospel in Spain (Ro. 15:23-25). By the time of Eusebius in the 5th century, Christian tradition held that Paul indeed had been released after his imperial hearing before Nero, but Eusebius, who first records this tradition, introduces it with the less than confident expression, "Report has it..."[181] One early tradition suggests that among Paul's difficulties, he was exiled by the emperor,[182] and if so, his exile may have been to the west and may have given opportunity for further evangelism. The Muratorian fragment, the Latin list of New Testament books drawn up in Rome toward the close of the second century, directly assumes that Paul, in fact, went to Spain.[183] Another tradition also favors the idea that Paul may have been imprisoned, released, and incarcerated a second time. The earliest tradition of Paul's martyrdom in Rome associates it with the Neronian persecution of Christians following the great fire in 64 A.D.[184] If this is true, then Paul was martyred at least two years after the probable date for his imperial hearing anticipated at the end of Acts.

The upshot of all this is that we do not have a clear picture of the closing years of Paul's life. He may have been released after his imperial hearing, he may have gone westward toward Spain, he may have been arrested again after two years, and he may have been martyred in Rome after a second imprisonment. Assuming that 2 Timothy was written during this second imprisonment, Paul may even have implied a second arrest by speaking of his "first defense" (2 Ti. 4:16), though this is by no means clear.[185] In any case, this is the traditional scenario, and if it is correct, Paul may have written the pastoral letters during this second imprisonment. Certainly he was incarcerated and anticipating death when he wrote 2 Timothy (1:8; 2:9; 4:6-7, 18). However, there is none of this sentiment about an impending death in either 1 Timothy or Titus. In fact, in these latter two letters, Paul seems to anticipate a continuing ministry (Tit. 3:12; 1 Ti. 3:14-15), and if so, then they may not have been

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[181] Bruce, *Paul, p.* 444.

[182] 1 Clement 5.

[183] Bruce, *Paul,* p. 449.

[184] Bruce, *Paul*, p. 441.

[185] See discussion in G. Knight III, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles [NIGTC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 468-470

written at the same time as 2 Timothy. Traditionally, the three letters have been treated together, and while this has merit, due to their common themes, it is by no means clear that they were written at the same time or under precisely the same circumstances.

As to Paul's death, Christian tradition (accepted by Eusebius and Jerome) has it that after his missionary trip to Spain, Paul was arrested yet again and subjected to another trial in Rome. This time, he was not acquitted but was executed under Caesar Nero by beheading on the Ostian Way. The tradition that he was executed in about AD 64 or 65 and buried on the site now covered by the basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls is considered to have a high degree of probability.[186]

[186] F. Bruce, "Paul in Acts and Letters," *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, ed. G. Hawthorne and R. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993), p. 687. There was little reason to build a church on this site unless it was authentic, and excavators have uncovered a slab from the time of Constantine (early 4th century) that bears the inscription: *PAULO APOSTOLO MARY[YRI]*, McCray, p. 349.