

## **Chronology of Paul's Missions and Death**

Following his stay in Damascus after his conversion, where he was baptized, Paul says that he first went to Arabia, and then came back to Damascus (Galatians 1:17). According to Acts, his preaching in the local synagogues got him into trouble there, and he was forced to escape, being let down over the wall in a basket (Acts 9:23). He describes in Galatians, how three years after his conversion, he went to Jerusalem, where he met James, and stayed with Simon Peter for 15 days (Galatians 1:13–24). According to Acts, he apparently attempted to join the disciples and was accepted only owing to the intercession of Barnabas — they were all understandably afraid of him as one who had been a persecutor of the Church (Acts 9:26–27). Again, according to Acts, he got into trouble for disputing with "Hellenists" (Koine Greek speaking Jews and Gentile "God-fearers") and so he was sent back to Tarsus.

Paul's narrative in Galatians states that 14 years after his conversion he went again to Jerusalem. It is not known exactly what happened during these so-called "unknown years," but both Acts and Galatians provide some details. At the end of this time, Barnabas went to find Paul and brought him back to Antioch (Acts 11:26).

When a famine occurred in Judaea, around 45–46, Paul, along with Barnabas and a Gentile named Titus, journeyed to Jerusalem to deliver financial support from the Antioch community. According to Acts, Antioch had become an alternative center for Christians, following the dispersion after the death of Stephen. It was at this time in Antioch, Acts reports, the followers of Jesus were first called "Christians."

### *First missionary journey*

Paul's first missionary journey begins in Acts 13 in Antioch in approximately AD 47. During this period the Christian church here grew in prominence partially due to Jewish Christians fleeing from Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit, speaking through one of the prophets listed in Acts 13:1, identifies Barnabas and Saul to be appointed "for the work which I have called them to." The group then releases the pair from the church to spread the Gospel into the predominantly Gentile mission field. The significance of the Holy Spirit selecting him can be seen in Galatians 1:1 when Paul states that he is made an apostle "not through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father."

Traveling via the port of Seleucia Pieria, Barnabas and Saul's initial destination is the island of Cyprus of which Barnabas had intimate knowledge, as he grew up there Acts 4:36. Preaching throughout the island, it is not until reaching the city of Paphos that they meet the magician and false prophet Bar-Jesus, described by Luke as "full of deceit and all fraud". The two rebuke the magician, causing him to go blind and, upon seeing this Sergius Paulus is astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

Once having left Cyprus, Saul exchanges his Hebrew name for the more appropriate Greco-Roman name of Paul for ministering to the Gentiles. It is also here that their helper John Mark departs them - an act which later becomes a source of much tension between Paul and Barnabas and ultimately leading to their split in Acts 15:36-41. The two then set about strategically preaching to major cities as they make their way across the provinces of Asia Minor. A noticeable pattern begins to develop: after successfully speaking to the people in an area, the local Jews become apprehensive resulting in hostility which eventually forces them to move on.

An example of this can be seen in Antioch of Pisidia. Paul's preaching in the local synagogue spreads quickly to ensure that almost the entire city turns out to hear him speak the following week. So radical is Paul's message of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles through the justification of the death and resurrection of Jesus, the two are expelled from the city by the jealous Jewish chief men of the city. Likewise in the subsequent city of Iconium their message splits the town population in two. Ultimately they are compelled to flee due to rising Jewish violence against them.

Traveling on to Lystra where no mention is made of any God fearing gentiles, it can be assumed that there was most likely no synagogue here. With no formal place to preach in they come across a man who has been crippled from birth. Seeing that the man has faith enough to be healed at Paul's instruction, he gets up and walks. In spite of this the Lystrians are now convinced that the two are the human incarnation of Zeus and Hermes and proceed to sacrifice oxen before them. Paul and Barnabas are so distraught at this that they tear off their clothes and cry out to the people. Pleading with the crowd, the style of preaching becomes more basic as Lystra has no knowledge of God. Paul starts from the basics by stating that God is a living God who made the heavens, earth and seas (Acts 14:15).

Paul is then hunted by disgruntled Jews from Antioch and Iconium and is stoned to the point where he is thought to be dead. Amazingly he gets to his feet and flees to Derbe and preaches the word there. He then opts to return to the cities he visited to encourage disciples, establish churches and appoint elders. This emphasis on the role of the whole church is strengthened once at home in Antioch where he finally gathers together the unified church to report to them on all his experiences. Here he summarizes the aim of his journey well, to "give God the honor and the glory" (Acts 15:4)

### *"Council of Jerusalem"*

According to Acts 15, Paul attended a meeting of the apostles and elders held at Jerusalem at which they discussed the question of circumcision of Gentile Christians and whether Christians should follow the Mosaic law. Traditionally, this meeting is called the Council of Jerusalem, though nowhere is it called so in the text of the New Testament. Paul and the apostles apparently met at Jerusalem several times. Unfortunately, there is some difficulty in determining the sequence of the meetings and exact course of events. Some Jerusalem meetings are mentioned in Acts, some meetings are mentioned in Paul's letters, and some appear to be mentioned in both. For example, it has been suggested that the Jerusalem visit for famine relief implied in Acts 11:27–30 corresponds to the "first visit" (to Cephas and James only) narrated in Galatians 1:18–20. In Galatians 2:1, Paul describes a "second visit" to Jerusalem as a private occasion, whereas Acts 15 describes a public meeting in Jerusalem addressed by James at its conclusion. Thus, while most think that Galatians 2:1 corresponds to the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15, others think that Paul is referring here to the meeting in Acts 11 (the "famine visit"). Many other conjectures have been offered: the "fourteen years" could be from Paul's conversion rather than the first visit; or "fourteen years" should be "four"; or Acts 11 and 15 are two alternative accounts of the same visit; or the visit is recorded in Acts 18:22. If there was a public rather than a private meeting, it seems likely that it took place after Galatians was written.

According to Acts, Paul and Barnabas were appointed to go to Jerusalem to speak with the apostles and elders and were welcomed by them. The key question raised (in both Acts and Galatians and which is not in dispute) was whether Gentile converts needed to be circumcised (Acts 15:2ff; Galatians 2:1ff). Paul states that he had attended "in response to a revelation and to lay before them the gospel that I preached among the Gentiles" (Galatians 2:2). Peter publicly reaffirmed a decision he had made previously (Acts 10-11), proclaiming: "[God] put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9), echoing an earlier statement: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34). James concurred: "We should not trouble those of the Gentiles who are turning to God" (Acts 15:19–21), and a letter (later known as the Apostolic Decree) was sent back with Paul enjoining them from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality (Acts 15:29), which some consider to be Noahide Law.

Despite the agreement they achieved at the meeting as understood by Paul, Paul recounts how he later publicly confronted Peter, also called the "Incident at Antioch" over his reluctance to share a meal with Gentile Christians in Antioch. Paul later wrote: "I opposed [Peter] to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong" and said to the apostle: "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?" (Galatians 2:11–14).

Paul also mentioned that even Barnabas sided with Peter. On the incident, the Catholic Encyclopedia: Judaizers: The Incident at Antioch states: "St. Paul's account of the incident leaves no doubt that St. Peter saw the justice of the rebuke." Acts does not record this event, saying only that "some time later," Paul decided to leave Antioch (usually considered the beginning of his "Second Missionary Journey," (Acts 15:36–18:22) with the object of visiting the believers in the towns where he and Barnabas had preached earlier, but this time without Barnabas. At this point the Galatians witness ceases.

*Paul's visits to Jerusalem in Acts and the epistles*

Acts	Epistles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First visit to Jerusalem (<a href="#">Acts 9:26–27</a>)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• after Damascus conversion</li> <li>• preaches openly in Jerusalem with Barnabas</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Second visit to Jerusalem (<a href="#">Acts 11:29–30</a>)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For famine relief</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Third visit to Jerusalem (<a href="#">Acts 15:1–19</a>)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With Barnabas</li> <li>• "Council of Jerusalem"</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Fourth visit to Jerusalem (<a href="#">Acts 18:21–22</a>)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To "keep the feast" (<a href="#">Acts 18:21</a>)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Fifth visit to Jerusalem (<a href="#">NIV</a>)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paul arrested</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No visit to Jerusalem immediately after conversion (<a href="#">Galatians 1:17–18</a>)</li> <li>• First visit to Jerusalem (<a href="#">Galatians 1:18–20</a>)</li> <li>• Sees only Cephas (Peter) and James</li> <li>• Second visit to Jerusalem (<a href="#">Galatians 2:1–10</a>)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With Barnabas and Titus</li> <li>• Possibly the "Council of Jerusalem"</li> <li>• Paul agrees to "remember the poor"</li> <li>• Followed by confrontation with Peter in Antioch (<a href="#">Galatians 2:11–14</a>)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Third visit to Jerusalem (<a href="#">Romans 15:25ff</a>, <a href="#">2 Corinthians 8 &amp; 9</a>, <a href="#">1 Corinthians 16:1-3</a>)</li> <li>• Paul delivers the collection for the poor</li> </ul>

*Second missionary journey*

Following a dispute between Paul and Barnabas over whether they should take John Mark with them, they go on separate journeys (Acts 15:36–41) — Barnabas with John Mark, and Paul with Silas.

Following Acts 16:1–18:22, Paul and Silas go to Derbe and then Lystra. They are joined by Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman and a Greek man. According to Acts 16:3, Paul circumcises Timothy before leaving.

They continue to Phrygia and northern Galatia to Troas, when, inspired by a vision they set off for Macedonia. At Philippi they meet and bring to faith a wealthy woman named Lydia of Thyatira, they then baptize her and her household; there Paul is also arrested and badly beaten. According to Acts, Paul then sets off for Thessalonica. This accords with Paul's own account (1 Thessalonians 2:2), though, given that he had been in Philippi only "some days," the church must have been founded by someone other than Paul. According to Acts, Paul then comes to Athens where he gives his speech in the Areopagus; in this speech, he tells Athenians that the "Unknown God" to whom they had a shrine is in fact known, as the God who had raised Jesus from the dead. (Acts 17:16–34)

Thereafter Paul travelled to Corinth, where he settled for three years and where he may have written 1 Thessalonians which is estimated to have been written in 50 or 51. At Corinth, (Acts 18:12–17) the "Jews united" and charged Paul with "persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law"; the proconsul Gallio then judged that it was an internal religious dispute and dismissed the charges. "Then all of them (Other ancient authorities read all the Greeks) seized Sosthenes, the official

of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of these things." From an inscription in Delphi that mentions Gallio held office from 51–52 or 52–53, the year of the hearing must have been in this time period, which is the only fixed date in the chronology of Paul's life.

### *Third missionary journey*

Following this hearing, Paul continued his preaching, usually called his "third missionary journey" (Acts 18:23–21:26), traveling again through Asia Minor and Macedonia, to Antioch and back. He caused a great uproar in the theatre in Ephesus, where local silversmiths feared loss of income due to Paul's activities. Their income relied on the sale of silver statues (idols) of the goddess Artemis, whom they worshipped; the resulting mob almost killed Paul (Acts 19:21–41) and his companions. Later, as Paul was passing near Ephesus on his way to Jerusalem, Paul chose not to stop, since he was in haste to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost. The church here, however, was so highly regarded by Paul that he called the elders to Miletus to meet with him (Acts 20:16–38).

### *Arrest and death*

According to Acts 21:17–26, upon his arrival in Jerusalem, the Apostle Paul provided a detailed account to James regarding his ministry among the Gentiles, it states further that all the Elders were present. James and the Elders praised God for the report which they received. Afterward the elders informed him of rumors that had been circulating, which stated that he was teaching Jews to forsake observance of the Mosaic law, and the customs of the Jews; including circumcision. To rebut these rumors, the elders asked Paul to join with four other men in performing the vow of purification according to Mosaic law, in order to disprove the accusations of the Jews. Paul agreed, and proceeded to perform the vow.

Some of the Jews had seen Paul accompanied by a Gentile, and assumed that he had brought the Gentile into the temple, which if he had been found guilty of such, would have carried the death penalty. The Jews were on the verge of killing Paul when Roman soldiers intervened. The Roman commander took Paul into custody to be scourged and questioned, and imprisoned him, first in Jerusalem, and then in Caesarea.

Paul claimed his right as a Roman citizen to be tried in Rome, but owing to the inaction of the governor Antonius Felix, Paul languished in confinement at Caesarea for two years. When a new governor (Porcius Festus) took office, Paul was sent by sea to Rome. During this trip to Rome, Paul was shipwrecked on Malta, where Acts states that he preached the Gospel, and the people converted to Christianity. The Roman Catholic church has named the Apostle Paul as the patron saint of Malta in observance of his work there. It is thought that Paul continued his journey by sea to Syracuse, on the Italian island of Sicily before eventually going to Rome. According to Acts 28:30–31, Paul spent another two years in Rome under house arrest, where he continued to preach the gospel and teach about Jesus being the Christ.

Of his detention in Rome, Philippians provides some additional support. It was clearly written from prison and references to the "praetorian guard" and "Caesar's household" may suggest that it was written from Rome.

Whether Paul died in Rome, or was able to go to Spain as he had hoped, as noted in his letter to the Romans (Romans 15:22–27), is uncertain. 1 Clement reports this about Paul:

"By reason of jealousy and strife Paul by his example pointed out the prize of patient endurance. After that he had been seven times in bonds, had been driven into exile, had been stoned, had preached in the East and in the West, he won the noble renown which was the reward of his faith, having taught righteousness unto the whole world and having reached the farthest bounds of the West; and when he had borne his testimony before the rulers, so he departed from the world and went unto the holy place,

having been found a notable pattern of patient endurance."

Commenting on this passage, Raymond Brown writes that while it "does not explicitly say" that Paul was martyred in Rome, "such a martyrdom is the most reasonable interpretation."

Eusebius of Caesarea, who wrote in the fourth century, states that Paul was beheaded in the reign of the Roman Emperor Nero. This event has been dated either to the year 64, when Rome was devastated by a fire, or a few years later, to 67. A Roman Catholic liturgical solemnity of Peter and Paul, celebrated on June 29, may reflect the day of his martyrdom, other sources have articulated the tradition that Peter and Paul died on the same day (and possibly the same year). Some hold the view that he could have revisited Greece and Asia Minor after his trip to Spain, and might then have been arrested in Troas, and taken to Rome and executed (2 Timothy 4:13). A Roman Catholic tradition holds that Paul was interred with Saint Peter ad Catacumbas by the via Appia until moved to what is now the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls in Rome (now in the process of being excavated). Bede, in his Ecclesiastical History, writes that Pope Vitalian in 665 gave Paul's relics (including a cross made from his prison chains) from the crypts of Lucina to King Oswy of Northumbria, northern Britain. However, Bede's use of the word "relic" was not limited to corporal remains.