

## Book Study #13

## ACTS

## THE LIFE OF PAUL

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### *Timeline of Paul's Life and Missionary Journeys Paul's Birth to First Missionary Journey*

#### Date            Event / Action

#### **2 A.D.?**            **Saul (Paul) Born in Tarsus**

Saul is born into an Israelite family of the tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5). He is circumcised on the eighth day, in compliance with the law of God (Genesis 17:12, Leviticus 12:3, Philippians 3:5). Paul has at least one sister (Acts 23:16).

The city of Tarsus is the capital of the Asia Minor province of Cilicia. Because the Roman empire designated it as a "free city," Saul was considered a free man and a Roman citizen (See Acts 22:25-29).

#### **c. 12 – 15**            **Young Saul Goes to Jerusalem**

Saul goes to Jerusalem to attend a Pharisaic Rabbinical school. This school is headed up by Gamaliel (see Acts 5:34), who Jews consider to be one of the greatest teachers ever of Judaism.

Saul is personally taught by Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) and eventually becomes a Pharisee (Acts 23:6-8, 26:4-5; Philippians 3:5).

#### *Who are the Pharisees?*

*Pharisee means "to separate" or "separated." Pharisaism was a major school of thought or sect of the Jews. Popular at the time of Jesus (John 7:48) they were known for their rigid adherence to the letter of the law (Acts 26:5, Matthew 23:3, Luke 11:39, etc.). Jesus frequently rebuked the Pharisees for their self-righteous, unmerciful, hypocritical way of life (Matthew 9:11, 23:14; John 8:7, Luke 18:11, etc.).*

#### **32**                    **Martyrdom of Stephen / Saul Leads Persecution Against Believers**

Stephen, whose Grecian name means "crown," is stoned for his testimony about Jesus (Acts 6-7). Stephen was one of the first deacons specially appointed by the early church to serve (Acts 6:1-6) and is considered the first Christian martyr.

A young, zealous Saul (Paul) consents to and witnesses Stephen's death (Acts 7:58-8:1), after which he leads persecution against believers of Christ (Acts 8:1-4).

#### **33**                    **From Saul to Paul: Saul of Tarsus' Conversion**

Saul (Paul) receives written permission from the High Priest (*Sanhedrin*) to search in Damascus' synagogues for those who believe Jesus is the Messiah. Saul is also given the authority to arrest and bring these believers to Jerusalem for trial and punishment. (Acts 9:1-2)

### ***What is the Sanhedrin?***

*The Sanhedrim (Sanhedrin) is the supreme council of the Jews composed of seventy elders plus the high priest (as president of council) that had jurisdiction over religious matters. In the New Testament, the Sanhedrim is also referred to as the "chief priests and elders of the people" (Matthew 26:3).*

Saul, accompanied by several others, travels to Damascus. As he approaches the city a burst of light suddenly appears and causes him to fall to the ground (Acts 9:3-4). He then hears the booming voice of Jesus saying:

**"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"** (Acts 9:4, NIV)

Saul is struck blind and led into Damascus by his traveling companions. Three days later Jesus inspires a disciple named Ananias to visit Saul and heal him of his blindness. After he is healed Saul is baptized and receives God's Holy Spirit. (Acts 9:4-18)

### **Paul (Saul) Begins Preaching the Gospel and has His First Death Threat**

Saul (first referred to as ***Paul*** in Acts 13:9) stays in Damascus and powerfully preaches the gospel. Paul's incredible ability to prove Jesus is the Christ (Messiah) so angers Jews in the city that they conspire to kill him (Acts 9:20-23). After learning of the plot against his life, Paul flees the city at night by having Christians lower him down a gate wall using a basket! Once out of the city he travels to Arabia, where for three years he is personally taught by Jesus (Galatians 1:11-12, 15-18).

### **36 Paul's First Visit to Jerusalem After Conversion**

After three years in Arabia, Paul journeys back to Damascus in the Spring of the year (Galatians 1:17). He then travels to Jerusalem and stays fifteen days (Acts 9:26, Galatians 1:18-19). Although Paul tries to get to know other converted people in Jerusalem, the brethren are suspicious of him and stay away (Acts 9:26). Barnabas, a disciple known for encouraging others, takes Paul to the apostles and personally vouches for his converted character (Acts 9:27). Paul is then accepted by fellow Christians.

Paul's preaching once again infuriates some Jews to the point where they seek to kill him (Acts 9:29). When the brethren learn about the threat to Paul's life they escort him to Caesarea and then send him back to his hometown of Tarsus (Acts 9:30).

### ***Was the Apostle Paul MARRIED?***

*The Bible does not definitively state what was Paul's marital status. However, the social norm of the time required Pharisees and members of the Sanhedrin to be married. As Paul was a Pharisee and likely a member of the Sanhedrin, he was almost certainly married at one point. If this is the case, Paul would have been a widower at the time of his ministry.*

### **36 – 40 Paul Stays Home**

Paul stays in his hometown of Tarsus from the summer of 36 A.D. to the summer of 40 A.D.

## 40 Barnabas Seeks Paul's Help with Gospel's Success

Due to the rapid spread of the Gospel among Antioch (in Syria) Greeks, the Jerusalem church sends Barnabas to minister to the new believers (Acts 11:20-22). God uses Barnabas, after his arrival in Antioch, to add even more converts to the church (Acts 11:23-24).

Barnabas soon travels to Tarsus, where Paul is located, to solicit his help with the newly converted Antioch brethren.

## 41 Serving in Antioch

Paul and Barnabas stay in Antioch for an entire year teaching the brethren (Acts 11:25-26).

## 42 – 43 Famine Prophesied; Christians Prepare to Send Relief

The prophet Agabus prophesies that a famine is soon to occur (Acts 11:28). Christians plant and gather food to relieve brethren in Judea (verse 29).

## 44 Jerusalem Receives Famine Relief

Food and relief are sent to Jerusalem by the hands of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 11:30). After delivering relief Paul and Barnabas, along with John Mark, return to Antioch (Acts 12:25).

## 44 – 46 Apostle Paul's First Missionary Journey

From Antioch in Syria Paul, Barnabas and John (surnamed Mark) begin their first journey (Acts 13:4-52, 14:1-25). They travel to Cypress (Cyprus) and Perga. John Mark leaves Paul and Barnabas at Perga and returns to Jerusalem (see Acts 13:13). After Perga Paul and Barnabas journey to Antioch in Pisidia, then to the cities of Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. When they finished preaching the gospel in Derbe, they retrace their steps through Lystra, Iconium, Pisidia Antioch and Perga to strengthen and teach the brethren (Acts 14:21-25). From Attalia they sail back to Antioch (Acts 14:25-26).

## 46 – 49 Paul and Barnabas in Antioch

Paul and Barnabas stay and preach in Antioch from autumn 46 A.D. to 49 A.D. (Acts 14:26-28).

## 49 Jerusalem Conference - *Is circumcision necessary for salvation?*

Certain men from Jerusalem travel to Antioch and begin teaching that certain believers (Gentiles) must be circumcised in order to receive salvation (Acts 15:1, 5). After Paul and Barnabas discuss and dispute this teaching with those promoting it, they and other church members go to Jerusalem to confer about the issue with the apostles and elders (Acts 15:2, Galatians 2:1-2).

### ***Who is considered a Gentile?***

*In general, the term **Gentile** was used by Jews to refer to all nations and people not Jewish. Over time, as the Jews began to increasingly pride themselves over what they felt was their special relationship with God, the designation of someone as a **Gentile** became one of contempt.*

## 49 Jerusalem Conference - *Is circumcision necessary for salvation?*

After arriving in Jerusalem Paul and Barnabas privately meet with James, Peter (Cephas) and John about the circumcision question (Galatians 2:4-10). The issue of whether converted Gentiles should be circumcised or not is then discussed with the entire church (Acts 15:6, 12, 22). It is ultimately decided that Gentiles need not be circumcised (Acts 15:19). A letter regarding this decision is delivered to the Gentile Christians in Antioch by a group composed of Paul, Barnabas, Silas and others (Acts 15:22-31).

Paul and Barnabas stay in Antioch for an unspecified number of days (Acts 15:35-36). A heated argument soon arises while discussing plans to revisit Christians in previously evangelized cities. Barnabas wants to take John Mark (who abruptly left them during their first missionary journey (Acts 13:13)) on the journey but Paul does not. The disagreement is so sharp that Paul and Barnabas split up: Paul takes Silas on a journey revisiting cities while Barnabas takes Mark and travels to the island of Cypress (Cyprus) (Acts 15:36-41).

### *Is Barnabas related to John Mark (Mark)?*

*Mark is the son of one of Barnabas' sisters (Colossians 4:10). This made Mark a nephew of Barnabas and correspondingly Barnabas was Mark's uncle.*

## 49 – 50 Apostle Paul Begins His Second Missionary Journey

In late 49 A.D. Paul and Silas leave Antioch for Tarsus. From there they travel to Derbe and Lystra. It is in Lystra that Paul meets Timothy, who would become his frequent traveling companion, fellow laborer in spreading the gospel and his closest friend (Acts 16:1; 1Timothy 1:2, 4:14).

Paul, Silas and Timothy travel to Iconium, Antioch in Pisidia, and then to the Asia Minor port city of Troas. In Troas Paul has a vision of a man in Macedonia (Greece) asking for help (Acts 16:8-9). Paul takes the vision as a sign from God and the three men immediately set sail for Neapolis (Acts 16:10-11). From there they travel to Philippi, where a woman named Lydia hears Paul's preaching and is baptized along with her entire household (Acts 16:12-15).

While in Philippi Paul casts out a demon from a female slave (Acts 16:16-18). Her masters, angry that they have lost the ability to make more money from the slave's demonic divination, stir up the city against Paul and Silas. The two evangelists are arrested, beaten and put in prison (Acts 16:19-24). An earthquake, coupled with a miraculous loosening of bonds and opening of all prison doors, frees Paul and Silas (Acts 16:25-40).

Paul, Silas and Timothy pass through the cities of Amphipolis and Apollonia, then travel to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1). In the city Paul visits a Jewish synagogue and for three consecutive Sabbaths (Saturdays) explains why Jesus is the Old Testament prophesied Savior of Mankind (Acts 17:2-4). Although many believe what is said certain Jews, envious of the Gospel's success, form a mob and start a riot (Acts 17:4-5). The riotous crowd goes to the house of Jason seeking Paul and Silas. When they are not found, the crowd drags Jason and some brethren to the local civil magistrates and accuses them of wrongdoing (Acts 17:5-8). In a short time, however, Jason and the brethren are let go. Paul, Silas and Timothy soon leave the city for Berea.

### ***Who is Jason?***

*Jason, whose house Paul and Silas stayed at in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5), may have been a relative of Paul (Romans 16:21).*

Paul and Silas visit and preach in a synagogue in Berea. The Bereans, unlike those in Thessalonica, are not only willing to listen to what Paul has to say they also verify what is preached against the Old Testament scriptures (Acts 17:11-12). Many Bereans come to believe the Gospel. Unfortunately, Jews from Thessalonica arrive in the city seeking to cause more trouble for Paul (Acts 17:13). He immediately leaves for the coast and sets sail for Athens while Silas and Timothy stay in Berea (Acts 17:14).

Once in Athens Paul writes Silas/Timothy requesting they come to him as soon as possible (Acts 17:15). As he waits for their arrival, he is troubled by how pervasive the worship of false gods are among the Athenians (Acts 17:16). His preaching leads to an invitation by several Athenians to elaborate on the Gospel. Paul is taken to the Areopagus, also known as *Mars Hill* (where the supreme judges of Athens assembled) where he uses the existence of an altar dedicated TO THE UNKNOWN GOD to reveal the existence of a Creator God who alone is worthy of worship (Acts 17:22-32).

### ***What or who is a Pagan?***

*The term pagan is synonymous with words such as heathen, Gentiles or idolaters. Pagans are considered those who do not have a religion or who worship false gods and not the God of the Bible.*

## **50 – 52 Paul Continues and Completes His Second Missionary Journey**

In late summer 50 A.D. Apostle Paul leaves the city of Athens and travels to Corinth (Acts 17:33, 18:1). He is soon joined by Silas and Timothy. After Corinthian Jews reject his message, Paul receives a vision from God telling him he will be protected from harm and that the Gospel message he carries will bear much fruit (Acts 18:4-10). Paul stays and teaches in the city for a year and a half (Acts 18:11).

- **Paul writes 1Thessalonians from Corinth in 50 A.D.**
- **Paul writes 2Thessalonians from Corinth in 51 A.D.**

The Jews eventually raise another tumult against Paul and bring him before the area's Roman governor (Acts 18:12-16). Paul is set free, however, when the governor refuses to hear the Jew's accusations. He stays in the city a little while longer (Acts 18:18) before sailing with Priscilla and Aquila to Ephesus (Acts 18:18-19). Paul preaches in a synagogue for a time then leaves Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus while he sails to Caesarea (Acts 18:19-22). He then travels to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Acts 18:21-22) then heads to Antioch (Acts 18:22).

## **52 – 53 Paul in Antioch; Peter is Rebuked**

The Apostle Peter visits Antioch during the Spring Holy Day season. Peter doesn't mind eating or fellowshiping with uncircumcised Gentile converts until brethren from Jerusalem, who still believe all Christians should be circumcised, arrive. When they come Peter, Barnabas and other church members stop eating with the Gentile converts and begin withdrawing contact with them. Paul, knowing this behavior is not according to the truth of God, publicly corrects Peter (Galatians 2:11-20).

- **Paul writes Epistle to the Galatians from Antioch in late Spring of 53 A.D.**

## **53 – 57      Apostle Paul Begins His Third Missionary Journey**

Paul travels from Antioch to the Asia Minor regions of Galatia and Phrygia in order to strengthen the faith of some Christians (Acts 18:23). He eventually arrives at Ephesus and stays in the city for a little more than three years (Acts 19:1-20). He then journeys to Macedonia. During his three month stay in the region he visits Corinth (Acts 20:1-3).

- **Paul writes 1 Corinthians in late winter of 56 A.D.**
- **Paul writes 2 Corinthians in late summer of 57 A.D.**
- **Paul writes book of Romans in winter of 57 A.D.**

## **58              Paul keeps Feast Day in Troas; Roman Soldiers Arrest Him in Jerusalem**

Paul and company travel through Macedonia to Troas, where they keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Acts 20:6). After the Feast Paul walks to Assos while the rest of his company (which includes Luke) takes a ship and sails to the city (Acts 20:13-14). Once they meet they take a ship to Mitylene (Acts 20:14). They sail again, visit a few cities, then come to Miletus (Acts 20:15). From Miletus Paul requests elders from the Ephesian church to visit him. When they arrive he warns them about the coming apostasy in the church (Acts 20:15-38).

Paul leaves Miletus by boat and visits places such as Coos, Rhodes and Patara before arriving at Caesarea. He stays at the house of Philip the evangelist for several days (Acts 21:1-8). Paul then sets off for Jerusalem, even though he was warned twice about entering the city (Acts 21:4, 10-15).

Arriving in Jerusalem Paul visits James (Acts 21:18) and soon afterwards goes to the temple with four Jewish converts (Acts 21:23-26). Jews from Asia who hate Paul, believing he has brought a Gentile into the Temple area, cause a riot (Acts 21:27-30). Roman troops hear of the tumult and race to the scene, saving Paul from certain death (Acts 21:31-32). They take Paul away from the crowds then decide to scourge him to find out what crime(s) he committed that so enraged the people. Paul is saved from being scourged, however, when the chief captain learns he is a Roman citizen (Acts 22:25-29). Paul's defense of himself the next day before the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:1-10) accomplishes little. He is soon escorted out of the city, at night, by Roman soldiers so that he wouldn't be killed (Acts 23:12-23). The soldiers take Paul to Felix in Caesarea, who is the Roman governor of Judea, so that he can decide Paul's fate (Acts 23:24-35).

### ***What is Scourging?***

*Scourging, also known as flagellation, is the act of whipping the human body. The Roman Empire often used scourging as a prelude to crucifixion (Matthew 27:26, John 19:1).*

*Scourging was commonly done with whips having small pieces of metal or bone at their tips. A person beaten this way could easily be disfigured and experience serious trauma, such as the ripping of flesh off the body or loss of an eye.*

## **58 – 60      Apostle Paul is a Prisoner in Caesarea; Appeals His Case to Caesar**

Paul defends himself three times within the two years he is a Roman prisoner (Acts 24-26). Although having been found to have done nothing worthy of bonds or death, Paul appeals his case to Caesar rather than risk returning to Jerusalem.

## **60 – 61      Apostle Paul Journeys to Rome**

In the Autumn of 60 A.D. Paul, along with other prisoners, boards a boat for Rome. The prisoners are escorted on their journey by a Roman Centurion named Julius (Acts 27:1-2). After stopping in several cities along the way, Paul and company make their way to the Isle of Crete (Acts 27:7). Although Paul warns Julius not to sail the Mediterranean during a dangerous time of the year (September - October), the Centurion disregards his advice and sets sail from Crete (Acts 27:9-12). The ship encounters a fierce storm along the way and is shipwrecked near the island of Malta (Acts 27:14 - 28:1). All those on the ship either swim or grab boards from the wreck and successfully make their way to the island. After staying three months Paul and company set sail again for Rome. He eventually arrives in the Italian port city of Puteoli (Acts 28:13), where he stays for one week with Christians in the area. He then walks the rest of the distance to Rome.

## **61 – 63      Paul the Prisoner Arrives in Rome**

The Centurion Julius delivers Paul to the captain of the guard in Rome (Acts 28:16), where he is allowed to live by himself guarded only by a soldier. For the two years Paul is in Rome he is able to receive visitors and continue his preaching of the Gospel (Acts 28:23-31).

- **Paul writes book of Hebrews in early Spring of 61 A.D.**
- **Paul writes the books of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.**
- **Paul writes the books of 1 Timothy and Titus in 63 A.D.**
- **Luke finishes writing the book of Acts (which is mostly about Paul)**

## **63 – 67      Paul is Set Free from Prison**

Paul is released from prison in 63 A.D. and travels to the island of Crete (Titus 1:5). He then goes to Nicopolis in Macedonia (Titus 3:12). From 64 to 67 A.D. Paul fulfills his goal of visiting Spain (Romans 15:28) and Britain.

## **67 – 68      Paul is Again a Roman Prisoner**

The Apostle Paul, once again a prisoner in Rome, writes a letter to his friend Timothy (2 Timothy). It is Paul's last writing before he dies a martyr's death around the middle of 68 A.D.

- **Paul writes 2 Timothy from a prison in Rome in 67 A.D.**

## **70      Destruction of Jerusalem's Second Temple by the Romans.**