

# CHURCH HISTORY

## The Missionary Journeys and Work of the Apostle Paul: A.D. 47-68

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### Early Church History, part 6

#### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. All of Paul's work was Holy Spirit empowered, and he had a definite missionary strategy (Acts 13:1-3).
- B. Missionary strategy:
  - 1. Paul never preached the gospel in a place where another had preached it first (Rom. 15:20). He was a pioneer missionary. This spirit enabled him to take the gospel to Rome, and possibly as far as Spain in his lifetime.
  - 2. He would go to a strategic city and start a local church in that city. He would train the converts in the Word and establish local church governments with elders (Acts 14:21-23).
  - 3. The converts were to take the gospel to the regions in and around the strategic cities.
  - 4. Paul always went to the synagogues first with the message of Christ. When it was rejected, he turned to the Gentiles.
  - 5. Paul was sometimes self-supporting (he was a tent maker) because he did not want to be a burden to these infant churches (1 Cor. 9:12). Paul expected that those who preached the gospel should be paid by those who hear the gospel (1 Cor. 9:14), but when necessary he forfeited these rights for himself as a pioneer missionary.

## II. ROMAN RULERS

- A. *Introduction*: In 27 B.C. Caesar Augustus brought about the downfall of the Roman republic and set up a dyarchy in which he, as director, nominally shared control of the state with the senate. Unfortunately, his successors, as a whole, had neither the ability nor the character of Augustus, and they were guilty of misrule.
- B. *Caligula (A.D. 37-41)*: He was insane during most of his rule. There was hardly any persecution by the Roman state at this time.
- C. *Claudius (A.D. 41-54)*: He was an excellent administrator, and the Empire was fairly stable during his reign. It was in his reign that Paul made most of his missionary journeys.
- D. *Nero (A.D. 54-68)*: He was a cruel and bloody man who thought nothing of killing members of his own family. He is most famous for burning Rome and blaming it on the Christians (A.D. 64). During the last part of his reign, the church in Rome suffered terribly, for he hated Christians.
- E. Before approximately A.D. 60, the church was persecuted by the Jews (religion), not by Rome (state).

## III. MISSIONARY JOURNEYS AND THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL

- A. First Journey (A.D. 47-49) (Acts 13:1–14:28)
  - 1. Paul and Barnabas were called by the Holy Spirit and commissioned by the local church at Antioch to preach the gospel to unevangelized fields (Acts 13:1-3). Believers in Christ were first called Christians at Antioch (Acts 11:26). Before this time, they were probably called disciples or Nazarenes.
  - 2. They first went to Cyprus and preached in the cities of Salamis and Paphos. John Mark was with them (Acts 13:5). It is recorded that only Sergius Paulus believed (Acts 13:7-12). Apparently, there was not too much fruit in Cyprus.

3. They then went to Perga in Pamphylia (Acts 13:13), but John Mark apparently became discouraged and went back home to Jerusalem (cf. Acts 15:36-41).
4. They then went to Antioch of Pisidia, and on the first Sabbath preached to the Jews in the synagogue (Acts 13:14) on the subject of justification by faith (Acts 13:38-39). Many Jews and Jewish proselytes believed (Acts 13:44). On the next Sabbath, the whole city turned out to hear the gospel (Acts 13:44). When the Jews mocked the message of Christ, Paul turned to the Gentiles with the gospel message (Acts 13:46-49).
5. When the persecution became unbearable, they left Antioch and came to Iconium (Acts 13:50-52). Here they preached to the Jews and the Greeks, and the city was divided over the issue of Christ. An attempt to stone Barnabas and Paul was avoided (Acts 14:1-5).
6. Having fled Iconium, they went to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and preached the gospel (Acts 14:6-7). Apparently, many were interested in the gospel, but Jews from Antioch in Pisidia followed Paul to Lystra and persuaded the people against Paul and his Christ. Paul was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:25).
7. Half dead, Paul arose and went to Derbe with Barnabas (Acts 14:20) and preached the gospel. Apparently some responded to Christ but this is not recorded (Acts 14:21).
8. They then went back through Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, looking after their converts and encouraging them in their persecution from the Jews (Acts 14:21-22). They also appointed elders in these churches who were to rule and instruct the converts (Acts 14:23).
9. They then went back to Perga, and then went to Attalia and preached the gospel (Acts 14:25).
10. Paul and Barnabas then returned to Antioch in Syria where they shared with the local church at Antioch that God had done wonderful works among the Gentiles (Acts 14:26-28).

B. The Jerusalem Council (A.D. 49) (Acts 15)

1. Christian legalists had a big impact on many because they said that unless a person was circumcised and kept the Mosaic Law after conversion, he could not be saved (Acts 15:1). Paul and Barnabas got into a big argument and opposed this Christian legalism. They were asked to go to Jerusalem (the center of Christianity) to get this issue settled (Acts 15:2).
2. Present at the council were the apostles and elders. There was much heated discussion, but it was finally concluded that the Gentile and the Jew are saved by grace through faith (Acts 15:11), but the saved Gentiles were asked to abstain from all idolatry, fornication, strangled meat and blood, which were terrible stumbling blocks to the saved Jews (Acts 15:1-20).
3. The Jerusalem Council was the most important council in church history, for it set forth justification by faith and freedom from the Mosaic Law as a way of life. We should thank God for Paul who set himself resolutely against all legalistic tendencies.

C. Second Missionary Journey (A.D. 50-51) (Acts 15:36–18:21)

1. This second missionary journey originally was a follow-up campaign for believers already reached in the first missionary journey (Acts 15:36). Paul and Barnabas got in an argument over John Mark, and parted company. The result was that Barnabas went to Cyprus with Mark, and Paul, taking Silas, started out through Syria and Cilicia confirming the faith of believers (Acts 15:37-41).

Even Christians in the early Church had differences of opinion on certain things, but the work went on.

2. Paul and Silas then went to Derbe where they met Timothy, and continued on to Lystra, following up with the Christians (Acts 16:1-5).
3. They then turned north and went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia. It does not mention the cities that were visited, but now it becomes a missionary effort (Acts 16:6). They wanted to preach the gospel in Asia, but they were forbidden to do so by the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6). Here is a good indication of the sovereignty of God in

evangelization, for there were multiplied millions in Asia who needed Christ, but God wanted the gospel preached in the west. Some have taken Asia to be Asia Minor where Paul had done his first missionary work. If this is the case, then the reason for the Macedonian call was that there were churches in this area already to evangelize the Asia Minor area, so Paul was called west.

4. Going westward to Mysia, they wanted to go to the area of Bithynia, which was back towards Asia, but the Spirit of God did not permit them to do so (Acts 16:7). Therefore, they came to Troas (Acts 16:8).
5. At Troas, Paul and Silas received the supernatural Macedonian call to take the gospel to Greece and its surrounding areas (Acts 16:9-10). From Troas they went to Samothracia and Neapolis, but apparently no preaching was done (at least none is recorded) (Acts 16:11).
6. They then arrived in Philippi, the greatest city of Macedonia (Acts 16:12). The first convert in the west was Lydia (Acts 16:13-15). Many were turning to Christ, and this disrupted the whole city so that Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown in jail (Acts 16:16-24).
7. After a miraculous deliverance from jail (Acts 16:25-40), they passed through Amphipolis and Appollonia and came to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1). Paul preached in the synagogue and some Jews and proselytes believed. Quite a few Gentile women also came to know the Saviour (Acts 17:2-4). The Jews stirred up trouble (Acts 17:5-9), and Paul and Silas were accused of “turning the world upside down” with their gospel (Acts 17:6).
8. Immediately they moved on to Berea and preached in the synagogue. The people in Berea were students and searched the Scriptures. The result was that many believed, even prominent Greek men and women (Acts 17:10-12). But the legalizers dogged Paul’s trail and, coming from Thessalonica, stirred the people against Paul’s gospel (Acts 17:13). Paul went on, but Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea (Acts 17:14).
9. They then came to Athens, and first went to the synagogue to preach (Acts 17:15-17). Next, Paul preached his famous sermon on Mars Hill to the intellectuals of his day (Acts 17:18-34). Some mocked, some

wanted to hear more, and others believed in Jesus Christ (Acts 17:32-34).

10. Then Paul moved on to Corinth and preached Christ. Many believed and were saved, and he abode in Corinth for 1½ years (Acts 18:1-11). In Corinth, Paul wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians to deal with the problem of the second coming of Jesus Christ. Nearly every book written by Paul was penned to meet existing problems in local assemblies.
11. He then went on to Cenchrea, Ephesus, Jerusalem, and then apparently back up to Antioch of Syria (Acts 18:18-23).

D. Third Missionary Journey (A.D. 52-57) (Acts 18:23–19:16)

1. The missionary journey began at Antioch. Paul first went through Galatia and Phrygia, probably visiting the churches of Lystra, Derbe, Iconium, and Pisidia (Acts 18:23).
2. Paul then went to Ephesus, spending about three years there. He taught a class in the secular school of Tyrannus, and many were saved. Luke records that “all Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:8-10). The gospel had such an impact upon Ephesus that pagan idolatry lessened, and this had a negative economic effect on the silversmiths who made idols. These silversmiths stirred the people against Paul so that he was put on trial before the city, but he was proven innocent and released (Acts 19:23-41). At Ephesus Paul wrote 1 Corinthians and Galatians concerning legalism.
3. Paul then went to Macedonia, probably passing through Troas. Here he wrote 2 Corinthians which substantiates his apostleship.
4. Next, he visited the church in Greece, staying at Corinth about three months, and then returned to Troas (Acts 20:6-12). At this time he wrote Romans, a great treatise of salvation.
5. Paul then went from Troas to Miletus, from there to Tyre, then on to Caesarea, and finally to Jerusalem.

#### IV. THE LAST YEARS OF PAUL'S MINISTRY

- A. *Caesarean Imprisonment (A.D. 57-59)*: After his arrest (Acts 21:27ff.) Paul gave his defense before the multitude (Acts 22) and before the Sanhedrin (Acts 23) in Jerusalem before being taken to Caesarea under guard (Acts 23:23-35). He was a prisoner for more than two years (Acts 24:27). Festus succeeded to the governorship of Palestine in the summer of A.D. 59 and Paul, appealing to Caesar, was sent to Rome soon afterward (Acts 25:10-12; 27:1ff., especially verse 12).
- B. *Voyage to Rome (A.D. 59-60) (Acts 27:1-28:16)*: The voyage began in the late A.D. 59, and Paul arrived in Rome soon after the end of the winter in A.D. 60 (Acts 28:11-16). Paul wanted to get to Rome, but he never thought he would get there as a prisoner of the state. God works in mysterious ways.
- C. *Roman Imprisonment (A.D. 60-62) (Acts 18:16-31)*: Paul was a prisoner of the Roman state under house arrest. He could have visitors, but he was confined to certain quarters. Still, God accomplished his purpose in this, for Paul was able to lead many of those of Caesar's household to Christ (Phil. 4:22). Paul must have carried on an extensive writing ministry during this time, writing Philippians among other things. Paul probably would not have written these letters had he not been in jail.
- D. *Release from Roman Imprisonment (A.D. 60-62)*: Acts 28 ends without any charges being pressed against Paul. Philemon 22 and Philippians 1:25; 2:24 indicate that Paul anticipated fairly certain release. During this imprisonment Paul wrote several books, and sometime after his release, he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus.
- E. *Visit to the East: (Philemon 22; Phil. 2:24)*
- F. *Establishment of a work in Crete: (Titus 1:5)*
- G. *Journey to Spain (A.D. 62-68) (Rom. 15:28)*: Both scriptural and external evidence point to a free ministry for Paul after Acts 28. In the Muratorian fragment (A.D. 170) the journey to Spain is spoken of as a well-known fact. Clement of Rome spoke of Paul journeying to the extreme limits of the west, by which he must have meant Spain, for no Roman would have called Rome the extreme limits of the west. Romans 15:28 indicates that as far as Paul was concerned, his course of ministry would include a trip to Spain. When he

wrote in 2 Timothy 4:7 that his course was finished, the journey to Spain had evidently already occurred.

- H. *Return Visit to the East (2 Tim. 1:3; 4:13-14)*: This included a stop at Nicopolis (Tit. 3:12) where he was to meet Titus.
- I. *Wintering at Troas with Carpus (2 Tim. 4:13-14)*.
- J. *Arrest and Second Imprisonment at Rome (A.D. 68)*: He was arrested so suddenly and snatched away so unexpectedly that he had no time to secure his Old Testament parchments and cloak. Later in prison he wrote to 2 Timothy in which he asked Timothy to bring these items to him before the next winter (2 Tim. 4).
- K. *Execution in Rome (A.D. 68)*: Paul died under Nero before June A.D. 68 (2 Tim. 4:6).