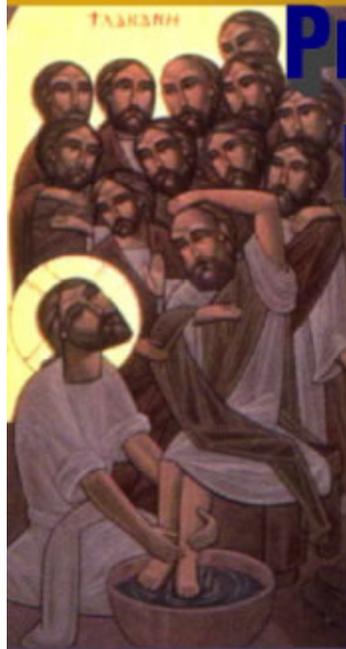




Servants' Preparation Program



Coptic Orthodox
Diocese of the
Southern
United States

*"For I have given you an example,
that you should do as I have done to you"
John 13:15*

Coptic Orthodox
Diocese of the Southern United States

NT 102
ACTS AND PAULINE LETTERS

Servants' Preparation Program

By Fr. Luka Wassif

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The Book of ACTS

Position of the Book:

It is the 5th according to the order of the Books of the New Testament; it also represents a seal for the historical books in the New Testament.

It is a perfect finale for the Gospels and an essential prelude for the Epistles. As all the signs and prophecies concerning many things and promises about the Holy Spirit increase towards the end of the Gospels, this Book documents the fulfillment of all these promises.

- **Mark 16:17, 18** ^{“17} *And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well”*
- **Luke 24:47-49** ^{“47} *and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ And you are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high”*
- **John 14:12-17** ^{“12} *Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. ¹³ And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. ¹⁵ If you love Me, keep My commandments. ¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you”*

As for the Epistles they are full of signs referring to events documented in this historical book. This shows the necessity of the Book of Acts to anyone studying the Bible forming a great guide for the reader to understand all its meanings.

The Book of Acts is the historical documentation of the First Church starting at the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ and extending to the second year of St. Paul imprisonment at Rome (Acts 28:30) over a span of 30 years narrated in 28 chapters.

Title of the Book:

The Book of Acts “ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΩΝ ΠΡΑΞΕΙΣ” or “ΠΡΑΞΕΙΣ ΤΩΝ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΩΝ” or Acts only “ΠΡΑΞΕΙΣ” and in Greek it is called “ACTUS APOSTOCORUN”. This title appeared in

the writings of St. Clement of Alexandria and in the Muratorian¹ Canon and the Codex Sinaiticus² of the Bible.

This title of the book without using the article “the” (Book of Acts not Book of the Acts) agrees with the contents of the book itself, given that the book present selections from the acts of the apostles that helped founding the early Church.

This book doesn’t present a complete or detailed documentation neither to the acts of each apostle nor to those of the apostles Peter and Paul, rather it presents a general outline of the achievements of Peter and Paul in Jerusalem and other cities under the Roman Empire among both Jews and Gentiles.

Author of the Book:

✠ The early Church agrees that the author of the third evangel and the Book of Acts is the same person, St. Luke the physician. Although the author didn’t mention his name explicitly neither in his evangel nor in the Book of Acts but it is so obvious to the reader to conclude that he narrated events which he took part in (in the Book of Acts) being one of those who followed Paul in his trips. The author used the personal pronouns of a first person in the plural case in all forms (i.e. we, our, us) as he met with Paul (during his second trip) in Troas. This meeting came right after the vision that Paul had of a Macedonian man standing and pleading with him, saying, “*Come over to Macedonia and help us.*” **Acts 16:9**

“Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them” **Acts 16:10**

He escorted Paul in his second trip till reaching Philippi where Luke remained while Paul continued his trip. Hence he was narrating using the pronouns of a third person starting from chapter 17 “*Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica ...*” then in **Acts 20:5, 6** “⁵ *These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas.* ⁶ *But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days*” when he met again with Paul returning from his third trip where they remained together till its end. It is clear in **Acts 21:1-15** that they remained together till reaching Jerusalem **Acts 21:17, 18** “¹⁷ *And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.* ¹⁸ *On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present*” also in **Acts 27:11** and **Acts 28:16** the last trip to Rome. See also **Colossians 4:14** “*Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you*”

See also **Philemon 23, 24** “²³ *Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you,* ²⁴ *as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers*” and **2 Timothy 4:11** “*Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry*”.

¹ This is the fragment that includes the canonical books; it was called so because the first one to publish was the Italian L.A. Muratori (1672-1750), it is a part of a manuscript that was kept in the Ambrosian Library in Milan. Originally it was kept in Bobbio, and it is dated back to at least the year A.D 170.

² A Greek manuscript of the Old and New Testaments, of the greatest antiquity and value; found on Mount Sinai, in St. Catherine's Monastery, by Constantine Tischendorf.

- † All this shows that Luke accompanied Paul in some of his trips as he escorted him during his second evangelical trip till reaching Philippi and in the third trip they met in Philippi to leave together to Jerusalem then traveled with him from Caesarea to Rome.
- † It also shows that the author was an eyewitness for what he documented which is something that all researcher agreed on.
- † Jack Pierre named four persons escorted Paul to discuss possible authors of the Book of Acts (Timothy, Titus, Silas and Luke)
 - As for Timothy, he can't be the author as it shows in [Acts 20:4-6](#) “⁴ *And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia—also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.* ⁵ *These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas.* ⁶ *But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days*” also in the parts which Timothy is accompanying Paul the author doesn't use the plural first person pronouns ([Acts 16:1-7, 14-18, 5-19:20, 22, 24](#))
 - It is not possible that either Silas or Titus is author as none of them was with Paul in prison but only Luke was there ([Colossians 4:14, Philemon 24 and 2 Timothy 4:11](#)). This leaves no doubt that Luke is the author of the Book of Acts.

The author of the Book of Acts is the author of the third Evangel:

- † Both books are addressed to the same person (Theophilus). This person had an important government position in the Roman Empire; he was then a man of great honor. This is supported by the fact that Luke called him the “*most excellent*” which was a standard way of addressing people of high stature.
- † Both books are strongly similar in language, style and concepts.
- † Both books were written in Greek language which was the language commonly used by physicians during that era. It also shows that the author was a well educated person as it is common among the physicians of that era.
- † The Book of Acts is a continuation of the third Gospel as pointed out in [Acts 1:1](#) where the author refers to the third Gospel by “former book” as the latter book is the Book of Acts. Luke recorded in his Gospel the life and works of Jesus Christ and in the Book of Acts he recorded the work of the Holy Spirit. In doing this he repeatedly used the word “Spirit” in the Book of Acts more than any other author of the New Testament books did.
- † The Book of Acts is a pleasant book as well as the third Gospel full of apostolic zeal and hope. It records all the events of success, persecution and even martyrdom turning whatever sad in them to become a reason for hope, happiness and joy.

Time of writing the Book:

In writing this book a number of years were needed to collect the information that St. Luke was an eyewitness for during his companionship to St. Paul in service and trips. It is mostly believed that Luke was done writing the book towards the end of the two years of the first imprisonment of Paul in Rome, i.e. circa A.D. 63.

Other Remarks

- ✠ It is impossible that the time of writing the book extended beyond the years 75 or 80 A.D. In contradiction to this as some of the researchers claim that the writing extended to A.D. 110 or 130 although that the epistles of Paul started to become widely used around the year A.D. 75.
- ✠ It can be concluded as well that the writing didn't extend beyond the year 70 A.D., the year of fall of Jerusalem that Luke never refer to although he did refer to Jesus Christ's prophecies concerning this fall [Luke 21:5-24](#).
- ✠ It is also impossible that this book was written after the year A.D. 68 as it never refers to the martyrdom of St. Paul.
- ✠ It is most believed that the book was written before the year A.D. 64. This is before the great persecution by the Emperor Nero which took place during the summer of this year as the book never points out to.
- ✠ It can't be done either before A.D. 62 or 63 as Luke narrates till the end of the second year of Paul being in prison in Rome which took place in A.D. 62 or 63.
- ✠ Hence the book most probably was finalized during the end of St. Paul imprisonment in Rome as the book concludes as follows [Acts 28:30, 31](#) ³⁰ *Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him,* ³¹ *preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him*". This proves that the book was finalized between A.D. 62 and 64.

Contents of the Book of Acts:

The book can be divided into two main parts

A First Part: The Jewish accepting Christianity (Chapter 1 – Chapter 12)

The main character in this part is "Peter the Apostle of circumcision"

A Second Part: The Gentiles accepting Christianity (Chapter 13 – Chapter 28)

The main character in this part is "Paul the Apostle of Gentiles"

The First Part

The Jewish accepting Christianity [Ch 1 - Ch 12](#).

- a- Introduction [Ch 1:1-26](#).
- b- Preaching the Bible in Jerusalem [Ch 2:1 - Ch 8:3](#).
- c- Preaching the Bible in Samaria, Damascus and Antioch [Ch 8:4 - Ch 12:25](#).

The Introduction:

- 1- Prologue [Ch 1:1-3](#).
- 2- The ascension of Christ and the return of the Apostles to the upper room near Jerusalem [Ch 1:4-14](#).

3- St. Peter's speech when choosing Matthias **Ch 1:15-26**.

Preaching the Bible in Jerusalem: Ch 2:1 - Ch 8:3

1- Founding the Church of Jerusalem

- The coming of the Holy Spirit, St. Peter's sermon, and three thousands believing **Ch 2:1-41**.
- The early church life (community) and the growth of faith **Ch 2:42-47**.

- 2- Spreading of Christianity and persecution of the Apostles
 - The healing of the Lame at the gate called Beautiful [Ch 3:1-11](#) and St. Peter preaching to the crowd after the miracle [Ch 3:12-26](#).
 - The witness of Peter and John before the Sanhedrin after being captured and then set free and the “The Believers' Prayer” [Ch 4:1-31](#).
- 3- Protecting the Church from internal and external dangers [Ch 4:32-5:42](#)
 - The unity of believers [Ch 4:32-34](#).
 - Ananias and Sapphira [Ch 5:1-11](#).
 - The Apostles Heal Many [Ch 5:12-16](#).
 - The apostles being jailed then an angel bringing them out [Ch 5:17-19](#).
 - The apostles entering the Temple courts to teach, appearing before the Sanhedrin, the speech of Gamaliel, and letting the apostles go [Ch 5:20-42](#).
- 4- Stoning Stephen to become the first martyr [Ch 6:1-8:3](#)
 - Choosing the seven deacons [Ch 6:1-7](#).
 - Stephen’s service, bringing him before the Sanhedrin and his long speech [Ch 6:8-7:53](#).
 - The martyrdom of Stephen and the persecution that followed [Ch 7:54-8:3](#).

Preaching the Bible in Samaria, Damascus and Antioch: [Ch 8:4 - Ch 12:25](#)

- 1- Samaritans and the Ethiopian eunuch
 - The Samaritans accepting Christ [Ch 8:4-8](#).
 - Simon the Sorcerer meets Peter and John in the Samaritan city [Ch 8:9-25](#).
 - The high official Ethiopian eunuch accepts Christ, and Philip is suddenly taken by the Spirit of the Lord [Ch 8:26-40](#).
- 2- Saul’s conversion and his service in Damascus and Jerusalem [Ch 9:1-30](#)
 - Jesus appearing to Saul on the road to Damascus, then Ananias baptizing Saul [Ch 9:1-18](#).
 - The early service of Paul (Saul after receiving Christ) in Damascus and Jerusalem [Ch 9:19-30](#).
- 3- Peter’s work, Cornelius believes and founding the first church of the Gentiles
 - Aeneas Healed in Lydda [Ch 9:31-35](#).
 - Arising Tabitha at Joppa [Ch 9:36-43](#).
 - Cornelius believes and sends for Peter, then Peter’s preaching in his house in Caesarea and the Holy Spirit falls on the Gentiles gathering in Cornelius’ house [Ch 10:10-48](#).

- Accusations against Peter from the Church of Jerusalem [Ch 11:1-18](#).
- Founding the Church of Antioch and the service of Paul and Barnabas there and the relief to Judea [Ch 11:19-30](#).
- 4- Herod's Violence to the Church, his death and the Word of God grows and multiplies [Ch 12:1-24](#)
 - The martyrdom of James the brother of John [Ch 12:1-2](#).
 - Seizing Peter and his miraculous release from prison by the Angel of God then him going to house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark and the guards commanded to be put to death [Ch 12:3-19](#).
 - Herod's violent death and the Word of God growing and multiplying [Ch 12:20-25](#).

The Second Part

The Gentiles accepting Christianity [Ch 13 - Ch 28](#). [For more details see "The Life of Paul"]

- a- Paul's first missionary trip (A.D. 45-50) [Ch 13:1-14:28](#).
- b- The Jerusalem Council [Ch 15:1-34](#).
- c- Paul's second missionary trip (A.D. 51-54) [Ch 15:36-18:22](#).
- d- Paul's third missionary trip (A.D. 54-58) [Ch 18:23-21:16](#).
- e- The Jews against Paul in Jerusalem during the Pentecost [Ch 21:17-23:21](#).
- f- Paul seized in Caesarea for two years [Ch 23:22-26:32](#).
- g- Paul's trip to Rome and his first imprisonment [Ch 27-28](#).

Canonicity of the "Book of Acts":

a) External evidence

The church tradition is the most important witness for the Book of Acts and its authorship to St. Luke.

First, the testimony of Eusebius of Caesarea:

- 1- Pointed out to what was documented by the Jewish historian Josephus³ about the Egyptian false prophet who got together thirty thousand men that were deluded by him; these he led round about from the wilderness to the Mount of Olives. He was ready to break into Jerusalem by force from that place; and if he could but once conquer the Roman garrison and the people, he intended to rule them by the assistance of those guards of his that were to break into the city with him. Now when Felix⁴ was informed

³ Flavius Josephus, Jewish historian, born A.D. 37, at Jerusalem; died about 101. He belonged to a distinguished priestly family, whose paternal ancestors he himself traces back five generations; his mother's family claimed descent from the Machabeans. He received a good education, and association with distinguished scholars developed his intellectual gifts, more especially his memory and power of judgment.

⁴ Antonius Felix, Procurator Judaea A.D. 52-59.

of these things, he ordered his soldiers to take their weapons, and came against them with a great number of horsemen and footmen from Jerusalem, and attacked the Egyptian and the people that were with him. He also slew four hundred of them, and took two hundred alive. But the Egyptian himself escaped out of the fight, but did not appear any more.

Eusebius commented on this story saying “It worth comparing the description mentioned here about the Egyptian versus the one mentioned in the Book of Acts. During the rule of Felix over Judea and after the Jews stirring people against Paul the centurion (the commander) asked Paul “*Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?*” [Acts 21: 38](#)”

- 2- Witnessed that Luke is the author of the book, (III:IV:I).
- 3- Talked about the canonical books saying “First of all should be the four Gospels then followed by the Book of Acts”, (III:XXV:I).
- 4- Never mentioned the Book of Acts is one of the books disputed upon, (III:XXV).
- 5- Referred to the epistle of Polycrates⁵ to Victor⁶ I, the Roman pope in which Polycrates refers to the Book of Acts.

Second, the Muratorian Canon:

This manuscript dated back to at least the year A.D 170 witnessed for the canonicity of the Book of Acts.

b) Internal evidence

Many internal evidences proves the authenticity and canonicity of this book, these can be seen when comparing between

- a- St. Peter’s preaching style in the Book of Acts versus the style of his two epistles
- b- What was quoted from St. James sayings in the Book of Acts versus his epistle.
- c- What was quoted from St. Paul sayings in the Book of Acts versus his epistles.

Place of origin of the “Book of Acts”:

There is no certain agreement concerning this, most probably Luke wrote this book during the period he spent with Paul in Rome (during Paul’s first imprisonment) as Paul mentioned in some the captivity epistles “*Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you*” [Colossians 4:14](#) and “²³*Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you,* ²⁴*as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.*” [Philemon 23, 24](#).

⁵ Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus.

⁶ Victor I, the 13th pope of Rome, was the first African pope (i.e., from the Roman provinces of Africa. He could have been a native or a descendant of Roman colonists; Romans were largely colorblind and a person’s race was rarely recorded). His reign extended from about 189 to 199.

Objective of writing the Book of Acts

This book doesn't present a complete or detailed documentation neither to the acts of each apostle nor to those of the apostles Peter and Paul. Nevertheless the book has an educational purpose and the selected events and occurrences narrated agree with such a purpose.

St. Luke planned to continue his narration at the point he ended up his gospel. A main reason for this is to show the divine work of Jesus Christ in supporting the spread of Christianity in Jerusalem and outside through the Holy Spirit [Acts 1](#).

It can be seen that Luke pauses narrating the events near the end of the two years St. Paul spent in prison to state that the message of Christ has reached the end of the earth to the point that it entered the capital of the Roman Empire and here is Paul the great apostle of Christianity declares the Word of God in Rome.

Christ in the Book of Acts

Christ is risen from the dead, He works through His Holy Spirit in His Church.

This Church is the body of Christ after His ascension into Heavens.

In this book we see Jesus rising from the dead, ascending into heavens, ever living, glorified, and working through the power of His Holy Spirit in His Church on earth.

It is valid to call this book the "Book of Acts of the Holy Spirit" or the "Book of Acts of the Savior the risen from the dead"

Our teacher Luke writes in the prologue of this book, the evangel that he previously wrote included all that Jesus began both to do and teach [Acts 1:1](#). Now in the Book of Acts, Luke tells us of all that Jesus is still doing and teaching through the Holy Spirit, expressed on the mouths of His holy apostles. Christ has promised his apostles before leaving them and ascending to heavens to send them the Holy Spirit ²⁶ *But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.* ²⁷ *And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning"* [John 15:26-27](#). Jesus Christ fulfilled His promise to the disciples and poured out His Holy spirit upon them when they were gathered in the upper room [Acts 2:16, 17, 33](#). From that hour on the disciple started witnessing and preaching through the Holy Spirit to accomplish His plans *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth"* [Acts 1:8](#).

The Holy Spirit started to work in the hearts of the receivers and draw them to believe in Christ. St. Peter expressed this saying *"And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him"* [Acts 5:32](#).

Based on this we can surely say that the Book of Acts is **“The Book of the Living witness to Christ”**

The whole book witnesses to Christ, no wonder, the work of the Holy Spirit is to witness to Christ *“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me”* **John 15:26**. The Holy Spirit also glorifies Christ *“He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you”* **John 16:14**.

- † The Book of Acts is a living witness to the sayings of Jesus Christ and His teachings and its effectiveness. *“And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all”* **Acts 4:33**. With every time this book is being studied new evidence are declared to the believer concerning the power of the Savior who ascended to the right hand of His Father in saving so many souls through the witness of His disciples with the help of His Holy Spirit working in them.
- † Christ is the one who poured out the Holy Spirit on the Pentecost **Acts 2:33**.
- † Christ is the one who chose the disciples and apostles and chose for them the countries which they should go preach the Word of God to its people. *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”* **Acts 1:8**.
- † Christ was glorified through so many miracles that were declared on the hands of his apostles and disciples in His name. Miracles such as Peter’s shadow healing diseases when falling on the sick **Acts 5:15**, and the handkerchiefs or aprons from Paul’s body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them **Acts 19:12**. Then the prophecy of David the king was fulfilled *“You are awesome, O God, in your sanctuary; the God of Israel gives power and strength to his people”* **Acts 68:35**.
- † Christ in this book proved His promises to His disciples, those promises He made to them before ascending into heaven. He is truly with them all the days and until the end of times. He worked and spoke through them, and proved every word they said, none of His words will fall. The power of His church is shown in healing the crippled at the temple gate called Beautiful **Acts 3**. This power is also declared in what happened to Ananias and Sapphira and St. Luke documents this saying *“Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events”* **Acts 2:11**.
- † In this book we see how the teachings of Christ turned into living virtues. We see the Christian love practically applied in the life of fellowship adopted by the early Church ⁴⁴ *Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,* ⁴⁵ *and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need”* **Acts 2:44:45**.
- † In this book the words of Christ in the parables of the “Mustard Seed” and the “Leaven” was fulfilled **Matthew 13:31-33**. The parable of the Mustard Seed refers to the spread of Christianity as it is being preached to the whole world, and the parable of the “Leaven” refers to the work of the heavenly Grace in us.
- † The direct intervention of the Savior in running His Church becomes so clear in the Book of Acts. He is the one who guided the Church to accepting the Gentiles. He used Peter to open the door for the gospel and the door for accepting the faith by the Jews on the Pentecost. He

used him as well to open the door for the Gentiles as well when Peter preached Cornelius. This was fulfillment to all what Christ promised them “18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ¹⁸ *All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.* ¹⁹ *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*” **Matthew 28:18-19**. The Church in its early beginning didn’t recognize the vast responsibilities and didn’t give up its Jewish opinions hence confined its preaching within Jerusalem. Then the persecution of the Church started and Stephen martyred the Church dispersed, and words of the Gospel spread all over. This proved the famous quote “Blood of the martyrs is the seed for the Church” as the blood of Stephen was one of the methods to preach the word outside Jerusalem.

The life of St. Paul, through the Book of Acts and his epistles

His name:

He had two names according to the tradition of some of the Jews. *Saul*, a Hebrew name means “asked for”, this name was used to refer to him in the first part of the Book of Acts till **Acts 13:9** “*Then Saul, who also is called Paul ...*”. The second name is Paul, a Roman name means “the small” and it was used to refer to him in the second part of the Book of Acts. In the Book of Acts other examples of people with two names “... *Joseph called Barsabas ...*” **Acts 1:23** and “*John whose surname was Mark*” **Acts 12:12**.

His birth and early years:

He was born circa A.D. 5 at Tarsus the capital of Cilicia located at the south of Asia Minor in the domain of the Roman Empire. He talked about his origin in **Acts 21:39** “I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city” and in **Acts 22:3** “*I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia*”. He was, as his father, a Pharisee of the tribe of Benjamin as he himself declared this “*circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee*” **Philippians 3:5**. Also in “*Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I?*” **2 Corinthians 11:22**. In **Acts 23:6** “*Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee*” and in **Romans 11:1** “*For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin*”. It seems that the people of Tarsus were granted the Roman citizenship in return for a certain service they presented to the Empire as Paul and all his family were Roman citizens as we read in **Acts 22:25-29** “²⁵ *And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?”* ²⁶ *When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, saying, “Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman.”* ²⁷ *Then the commander came and said to him, “Tell me, are you a Roman?” He said, “Yes.”* ²⁸ *The commander answered, “With a large sum I obtained this citizenship.” And Paul said, “But I was born a citizen.”* ²⁹ *Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him*”.

It can be concluded that Paul wasn't of a poor family, on the contrary of a high status influential one, by noting

- 1- Him acquiring the Roman citizenship.
- 2- In his epistle to the Romans he sends greetings to his in-laws known to the apostles "*Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was*" **Romans 16:7**.
- 3- In **Acts 23:16** we read about his nephew who spoiled the plot of the Jews against Paul who seemingly was a high official allows him to be exposed to confidential issues "*But when the son of Paul's sister heard of this plot, he went into the barracks and told Paul*".
- 4- He was of high honor, influence and respect in the Sanhedrin and among the Jewish leaders as he asked them for letters to the synagogues in Damascus to allow him lay hands on Christians "¹ *Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest* ² *and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem*" **Acts 9:1-2**, also **Acts 22:5**, **Acts 26:10-12**, and **Philippians 3:4-7**.

His Culture:

After St. Paul has finished acquiring knowledge at the city of Tarsus⁷ he was sent to Jerusalem to study the Law, there he became a student of Gamaliel the best teacher for the law in his time. St. Paul mentions this in **Acts 22:3** "*I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today*". Gamaliel was a very wise person as we can see him defending the apostles in the Sanhedrin **Acts 5:34-39**. St. Paul talked about the period that he spent as a youth in Jerusalem **Acts 26:4** "*My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know*"

Adding to his education and vast knowledge, St. Paul learned a craft, according to the Jewish tradition to avoid being in need. So he was a tentmaker, and he talks to the priests of the church in Ephesus **Acts 20:34** "*Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities; and for those who were with me*". During his second missionary trip he stayed with Aquila and his wife Priscilla at Corinth as they also were tentmakers **Acts 17:3** "*So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers*"

St. Paul was about 20-22 years old when our Savior started declaring Himself to people.

His Persecution to Christians:

The first encounter of the apostle Paul (Saul of Tarsus) is mentioned in the Book of Acts was during the martyrdom of Stephen **Acts 7:58-8:1** "*And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul..., Now Saul was consenting to his death*". Saul with a mislead conscience heavily persecuting Christians believing that he is doing a service to God

⁷ The city of Tarsus offered a wide variety of learning opportunities for the students in philosophy and liberal arts. One of the specializations of Tarsus had long been a center of Stoic philosophy, and several of its citizens were famous Stoic philosophers: Zeno, Antipater, and Athenodorus.

and to the Law **Acts 8:3** “As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison”.

Paul was not satisfied with pursuing Christians only in Jerusalem but went after them beyond Jerusalem. He headed to Damascus backed up by the authority of the chief priests to persecute Christians over there too **Acts 9:1-2** “¹ Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem”, also in **Acts 9:13-14** “¹³ Then Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name”.”

Paul explained this period of his life in

- ✠ **Acts 22:4-5** “⁴ I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, ⁵ as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished”
- ✠ **Acts 26:9-12** “⁹ Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. ¹¹ And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities. ¹² While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests”
- ✠ **1 Corinthians 15:9** “For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God”
- ✠ **Galatians 1:13** “For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it”
- ✠ **Philippians 3:5-6** “⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless”
- ✠ **1 Timothy 1:13** “although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief”

Paul becoming a Christian: Acts 9:3-19, Acts 22:6-16, Acts 26:13-18

Most probably this was around the year A.D. 36 during the reign of Tiberius⁸ Caesar - the one during his reign our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified – this was also during the reign of Herod Antipas⁹ over the Jews. Paul and his company were traveling to Damascus during day time and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. All of them fell to the ground amazed **Acts**

⁸ The second Roman emperor (A. D. 14-37), born on 16 November, 42 B. C. and died on 16 March, A. D. 37. He was the son of Tiberius Claudius Nero and Livia.

⁹ Antipas was a son of Herod the Great, after whose death he became ruler of Galilee. He married the daughter of Aretas, King of Arabia, but later lived with Herodias, the wife of his own half-brother Philip.

9:4, 26:14 then stood speechless Acts 9:7 seeing the light (*saw the light and were afraid Acts 22:9*) but they saw no one (*seeing no one Acts 9:7*) they heard a voice Acts 9:7 but they didn't recognize what was said Acts 22:9. One other possibility that they heard Paul talking but didn't hear "the one" was talking to Paul, also hearing doesn't implicitly mean understanding (but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me Acts 22:9). In many occurrences in the bible the word "hear" takes the meaning of "understand" (Deut. 18:15, Mat. 11:15, 13:9, John 8:9, Acts 3:23).

The words that Jesus spoke to Paul this day were "*It is hard for you to kick against the goads*" Acts 26:14. These words are the ones that changed Paul and restored him to his conscious and changed his beliefs about the crucified and those who believed in him. No doubt that the martyrdom of Stephen left a mark in Paul's memory, made him wonder how can a person be that forgiving towards his killers? How could Stephen withstand all the pain showing that much courage? His conscious must have been tormented and his heart was ready to accept the King and Savior, so he was born again once he received the call "*Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision*" Acts 26:19.

Adding to the time which Luke documented this event in Acts 9; he again quoted Paul talking twice about it in Acts 22 and Acts 26.

✠ Acts 22:6-16 ⁶ "Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. ⁷ And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' ⁸ So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' ⁹ "And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid,[a] but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me. ¹⁰ So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.' ¹¹ And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus. ¹² "Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, ¹³ came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him. ¹⁴ Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. ¹⁵ For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

✠ Acts 26:13-18 ¹³ at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. ¹⁴ And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' ¹⁵ So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶ But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. ¹⁷ I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, ¹⁸ to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'" These were Paul's words

defending himself as he spoke to King Herod Agrippa¹⁰ II and in the presence of Festus¹¹ the governor of Judea. It can be seen that Paul mixed Jesus words with those of Ananias as if all came from Jesus. This can be reasoned as he was defending himself and there was no need to make a distinction. Looking from a wider perspective, Ananias when talked to Paul he was guided by the Holy Spirit, hence these were all the words of Christ.

- ✠ **1 Corinthians 9:1** *“Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?”*
- ✠ **1 Corinthians 15:8-10** *“⁸ Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”*
- ✠ **Galatians 1:11-16** *“¹¹ But I make known to you, brethren that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus ChristBut when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles...”*
- ✠ **Ephesians 3:1-8** *“...that by revelation He made known to me the mystery as I have briefly written already...”*
- ✠ Also in **Philippians 3:5-7**, **1 Timothy 1:12-16** and **2 Timothy 1:9-11**.

It is hard for you to kick against the goads:

Goads the plural of goad which is a pointed rod used to urge on an animal. This verse means “There is no use of going against the will of God”. A close quote to his “The eye that hit the awls is gouged out”

- ✠ No doubt that Paul’s heart was aching and conscious was restless when he was persecuting Christians and rising against crucified Jesus. Maybe he couldn’t justify a reason for all this worry, maybe the forgiveness of Christ on the way to Damascus was to point him out to a certain weakness that he needs to rise against. His conscious was kicked by these goads to rise and be lead to preach the word of God to the whole world.
- ✠ When the Lord told him “It is hard for you to kick against the goads” is similar to the case of a man who bought an expensive ox to pull a plow¹², put the ox refused to obey going to the desired direction. The owner used the goads so that the ox should obey. Saul suddenly recognized that he is owned by God and God was trying to show him the way. In spite of all these kicks against the goads; God’s desire was to show him the way. From that time on it wasn’t his will anymore but the will of God. Paul must stop resisting the Nazareth, and start carrying the cross and fulfill God’s will.

¹⁰ Agrippa II was the son of Agrippa I (grandson of Herod the Great) and in A. D. 44, the year of his father's death, the emperor Claudius wished to give him the kingdom of his father, but he was dissuaded from his purpose because a youth of seventeen was hardly capable of assuming responsibilities so great

¹¹ Porcius Festus, Governor of Judea (60-62 AD). Festus replaced Felix as Procurator of Judea.

¹² An implement used to cut, lift, and turn over soil especially in preparing a seedbed.

At Damascus:

It was the command of Jesus to Paul *“Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do”* Acts 9:6. Then Paul entered Damascus blind and stayed for three days not eating or drinking but praying *“... he is praying”* Acts 9:11. The Lord appeared to Ananias the bishop of Damascus in a vision telling him to visit Paul staying in a house on the street called Straight ¹⁵ *“But the Lord said to him, Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. 16 For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake”* Acts 9:15-16. Ananias went to Paul laid his hands on him and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized, he received food, and strengthened. This was a turning point in his life from being a persecutor to the Church and believers to become the great apostle of Christianity preaching the faith he once wanted to eradicate.

“Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus” Acts 9:19 at the end of these days he left to Arabia. Arabia was a kingdom that spanned from Damascus to the far south near the sea. Aretas, the king of Arabia was the father-in-law of Herod Antipas, at that time they were in war against each other. As Herod Antipas had married the daughter of Aretas, but afterwards discarded her in favor of Herodias, the wife of his own half-brother Philip. Maybe Paul went there seeking protection and safety away from the Jews.

In Arabia:

Paul stayed three years in Arabia (A.D. 36-38). He spent these years studying the Old Testament lead by the Spirit to accept many facts. Paul talked about this period of his life ¹⁵ *“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, 16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus”* Galatians 1:15-17.

Also in 1 Corinthians 11:23 talking about the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist *“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread”* [during this period Tiberius died and Caligula¹³ became the Caesar of Rome]

At Damascus, again:

Paul returned to Damascus again A.D. 38 filled with zeal not the one he once had to resist Christ but zeal to witness to Christ. Acts 9:20-22 ²⁰ *“Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. 21 Then all who heard were amazed, and said, “Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?” 22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ”*. He stayed for so many days preaching Christ in Damascus so the Jews made a plot against him, to kill him; they watched the gates of the city to seize him. The disciples took him at night and let him down in a basket from the walls of the city ³² *“In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison,*

¹³ Emperor Caligula (A.D. 37- 41), filled his four years on the throne with a reign of terror that may have been the result of a medical condition

desiring to arrest me; ³³ but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands” **2 Corinthians 11:32-33**.

To Jerusalem:

After Paul escaped the plot against him at Damascus, he went up to Jerusalem “²⁶ And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. ²⁷ But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. ²⁸ So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. ²⁹ And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. ³⁰ When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus” **Acts 9:26-29**. He himself talked about this visit in **Galatians 1:18-19** “¹⁸ Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord’s brother”.

At Jerusalem another attempt to kill Paul was prepared “When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus” **Acts 9:30** and in Paul’s words “¹⁷ Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance ¹⁸ and saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.’ ¹⁹ So I said, ‘Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. ²⁰ And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’ ²¹ Then He said to me, ‘Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles’.” **Acts 22:17-21**.

At Tarsus:

Afterwards Paul spent about 6 years (A.D. 38-43) in Tarsus and he was preaching in Syria and Cilicia. **Acts 9:30** and **Galatians 1:21-24** “²¹ Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²² And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. ²³ But they were hearing only, “He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.” ²⁴ And they glorified God in me”. Paul founded many churches in these areas and it is most believed that he went through all the hardships he talked about in **2 Corinthians 11:23-26** during this period.

At Antioch: Acts 11:20-30

Paul stayed in Tarsus and its neighboring cities till the church of Antioch was established due to the efforts of those people spread out after Stephen’s martyrdom. Among those were people from Cyprus and Cyrene¹⁴. The Church of Jerusalem sent Barnabas to the church of Antioch to comfort the believers so they stay steadfast in the Lord. Barnabas remembered Paul, the youth who accepted Christ years ago and the skills he had in convincing and debating the Gentiles. Barnabas sought Paul at Tarsus till he found him then brought him to Antioch. They stayed together at Antioch for a year (A.D. 44) preaching to multitudes and bringing them into the faith “And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” **Acts 11:26**.

¹⁴ Cyrene was a city in Libya (Cyrenacia), North Africa.

To Jerusalem, a second time:

During that year Paul spent with Barnabas at Antioch ^{“27} *And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch.* ²⁸ *Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius¹⁵ Caesar”* **Acts 11:27-28**.

Due to this expected famine ^{“29} *Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea.* ³⁰ *This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul”* **Acts 11:29-30**. Then Paul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem bringing relief efforts during this famine. This visit was during the time of martyrdom of James the son of Zebedee and the imprisonment of Peter, both by the orders of Herod Agrippa I *“Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church”* **Acts 12:1** *“Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died”* **Acts 12:23**. *“And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark”* **Acts 12:25**.

The call to preach to the Gentiles: Acts 13:1-3

^{“1} *Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.* ² *As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”* ³ *Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away”*.

St. Paul’s Missionary Trips

First Missionary Trip:

Documented in **Acts 13:4-14:28** in the period A.D. 45-50, it was ended by the time when The Jerusalem Council was to take place A.D. 50, **Acts 15:1:34**.

✠ Companions of the trip: Barnabas and Mark accompanied Paul in this trip.

✠ Antioch: was always the start and end point of St. Paul’s trips.

The going trip

✠ Seleucia, the port of Antioch to the Mediterranean Sea.

✠ In the sea: Cyprus

a- Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews

b- Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, and was deluding him.

¹⁵ Tiberius Claudius Nero Germanicus (A.D. 41-54) followed Caligula. In A. D. 41 Judea and Samaria were given to Herod Agrippa I by the Emperor Claudius, whom he had helped to the throne.

“... ⁹ Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰ and said, “O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? ¹¹ And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.” And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. ¹² Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord” **Acts 13:6-12**.

✠ In the sea: Perga in Pamphylia, where John Mark departed them to return to Jerusalem.

✠ Antioch in Pisidia, **Acts 13:14-50**, where Paul preached on a Saturday in the Synagogue after the reading of the Law and the Prophets

“³⁸ Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; ³⁹ and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses” **Acts 13:38-39**. “Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed” **Acts 13:48**. “⁵⁰ But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. ⁵¹ But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium” **Acts 13:50-51**.

✠ Iconium, they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews tried to abuse and stone them so they fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region.

✠ Lycaonia,

a- At Lystra, Paul healed a cripple from his mother’s womb “⁹ This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, ¹⁰ said with a loud voice, “Stand up straight on your feet!” And he leaped and walked” **Acts 14:9-10**. Then the multitudes thought they are gods and tried to present sacrifices to them, but Paul and Barnabas tore their clothes and forbade them from doing this. “¹⁵ and saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, ¹⁶ who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. ¹⁷ Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness”.” **Acts 14:15-17**. “¹⁹ Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. ²⁰ However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe” **Acts 14:19-20**.

b- At Derbe “And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch” **Acts 14:21**. Derbe was the last stop to Paul in this trip, from which he started his return trip.

The return trip

“... they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”²³ So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” **Acts 14:21-23**.²⁴ And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.²⁵ Now when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.²⁶ From there they sailed to Antioch ...” **Acts 14:24-26**.

At Antioch,²⁷ Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.²⁸ So they stayed there a long time with the disciples” **Acts 14:27-28**.

The Jerusalem Council A.D. 50, Acts 15:1-34.

“¹ And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”² Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.³ So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren” **Acts 15:1-3**. This was Paul’s third time to Jerusalem, he talks about it saying “Then after fourteen years (from the time he met with Christ on the way to Damascus) I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me” **Galatians 2:1**.

This council was held in Jerusalem to discuss the conflict over circumcision headed by St. James¹⁶ the brother of the Lord. The council discussed this conflict that was to differentiate between the Jews and the Gentiles. They council ended the dispute concerning the Gentiles who accepted Christ and whether they have to follow the Law of Moses and pass through Judaism first or not. The Jerusalem Council presented the following decree **Acts 15:23, 29**

“... The apostles, the elders, and the brethren,

To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, Greetings

²⁴ Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, “You must be circumcised and keep the law”—to whom we gave no such commandment—²⁵ it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,²⁶ men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁷ We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth.²⁸ For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:²⁹ that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell”.

When Judas and Silas arrived at Antioch they assembled the people and informed them with the Council’s decree, so they were comforted and filled with joy.

¹⁶ James son of Alphaeus, he is the cousin of Christ, the son of Mary wife of Clopas (Cleophas). Was called James the Less, James the Just and the Bishop or Patriarch of Jerusalem also he’s the author of the Epistle of St. James

At Antioch:

“Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also” [Acts 15:35](#). At Antioch disagreements arose among Paul, Barnabas and Peter regarding several aspects. When Peter had come to Antioch he was mingling with the Gentiles and eating with them, but when certain men came from James Peter withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. The rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But Paul confronted them explaining to them their hypocrisy. “Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed” [Galatians 2:11](#).

Second Missionary Trip:

Documented in [Acts 15:36-18:22](#) in the period A.D. 51-54. “Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing”.” [Acts 15:36](#). This was the beginning of this trip.

✠ Companions of the trip: Because of the disagreement that took place between Paul and Barnabas concerning taking John Mark in this trip, Barnabas took John Mark and left to Cyprus and Paul took Silas as his companion during this trip.

The going trip

✠ Paul and Silas traveled by land to Cilicia, Derbe, Lystra

✠ At Lystra: Paul met for the first time with Timothy [Acts 16:1-3](#). He circumcised him (his mother was a Jew while his father was Greek), before taking him to join in the trip. They were visiting Churches delivering to them the decrees of Jerusalem Council “So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily” [Acts 16:5](#). They (Paul, Silas and Timothy) went through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia so they came to Mysia, and tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

✠ At Troas: a vision appeared to Paul in the night; a man of Macedonia¹⁷ stood and pleaded with him, saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us” [Acts 16:10](#). This was the heavenly declaration to preach to the Greeks.

✠ At Troas as well, Paul and his companions met with St. Luke to join them in their trip to Philippi. As Luke the author of the Book of Acts started from verse 10 to use the personal pronouns of a first person in the plural case in all forms (i.e. we, our, us). So they started sailing from Troas, to Samothrace, and the next day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi.

✠ At Philippi, a Roman Colony, which is the first city in the region of Macedonia many believed in the Bible and a certain woman named Lydia who was a seller of purple became a believer. Then Lydia and all her household were baptized, and invited the apostles to stay in her house. Then a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met Paul and his companions and followed them crying out, saying “These men are the servants of the Most

¹⁷ Macedonia, a region in the northern part of current Greece

High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation” for many days. So Paul, greatly annoyed, cast out the demon from her. But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities. The magistrates commanded them to be beaten with rods and when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. The jailer put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. *“But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them”* Acts 16:25. Through God’s miraculous ways the jail’s doors were opened and the keeper of the prison believed and his entire household. The keeper of the prison brought them to his house then when the command of the magistrates to release Paul and Silas he informed them. Then the magistrates after knowing that Paul and Silas are Romans wanted them to leave the city. Paul and Silas went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed by land to Amphipolis then to Apollonia from which to Thessalonica (Luke stayed back in Philippi).

- ✠ At Thessalonica, Acts 17:1-9, they preached Christ in the Synagogues and many were persuaded and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas. But the Jews who were not persuaded gathered a mob set the entire city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason dragged him to the rulers of the city as Jason has harbored them then he was let out for a bail. Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea.
- ✠ At Berea, Acts 17:10-15, the people there received the word with all readiness, but the Jews from Thessalonica came to Berea and stirred up the crowds. Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea to Athens but Silas and Timothy stayed and were to catch up with him.
- ✠ At Athens which was a center of arts and philosophy. While Paul was waiting for Timothy and Silas “his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols” Acts 17:16. Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers then he encountered a group of Epicurean¹⁸ and Stoic¹⁹ philosophers preached to them Jesus and the resurrection. They took him and brought him to the

¹⁸ By Epicurus, from whom this system takes its name, was a Greek, born at Samos 341 B.C., who, in 307 B.C., founded a school at Athens, and died 270 B.C. This philosophy was described by Epicurus as "the art of making life happy", and he says that "prudence is the noblest part of philosophy". His natural philosophy and epistemology seem to have been adopted for the sake of his theory of life. It is, therefore, proper that his ethics should first be explained. The purpose of life, according to Epicurus, is personal happiness; and by happiness he means not that state of well-being and perfection of which the consciousness is accompanied by pleasure, but pleasure itself. Moreover, this pleasure is sensuous, for it is such only as is attainable in this life. In this philosophy God is completely separate from man and there is no interconnection between. This stood in entire contradiction with the teachings of St. Paul and they accused him of bringing them back to superstitions that God became a man to save people.

¹⁹ The Stoic School was founded in 322 B.C. by Zeno of Cittium and existed until the closing of the Athenian schools (A.D. 429). Zeno of Cittium (Cyprus) was born in 366 B.C. and died in 280 B.C. was the disciple of Crates the Cynic. It was based on virtue, reason, and natural law as prime directives. By mastering passions and emotions, it is possible to overcome the discord of the outside world and find peace within oneself. Stoic philosophy is usually contrasted with Epicureanism.

Areopagus²⁰ to listen to him where talked in all wisdom about the “unknown God” **Acts 17:22-30**. “Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you” **Acts 17:23**. “²⁵ Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. ²⁶ And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, ²⁷ so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸ for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring’.” **Acts 17:25-28**. “³⁰ Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, ³¹ because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”” **Acts 17:30-31**. Paul did not have a great success at Athens the cradle of philosophy as they mocked him although his preaching was fruitful with a number of them such as Dionysius the Areopagite who later became a Bishop of Athens and a woman called Damaris **Acts 17:34**. Afterwards Paul left to Corinth.

✠ At Corinth, **Acts 18:1-17**, Paul stayed at Corinth for a long period (a year and six months) during the years A.D. 52-54. Corinth was a center of trade between the east and the west; it was noted for its wealth, and for the luxurious, immoral and vicious habits of the people. Paul pointed out to these immoralities in his Epistle to the Romans **1:18-32** which he wrote while staying at Corinth in his third missionary trip. There was Paul’s first encounter with Aquila and Priscilla, who were from Rome but settled down in Corinth after the decree by Claudius Caesar commanding all the Jews to depart from Rome, A.D. 52. They were, same as Paul, tentmakers.

Paul was preaching to the Jews in their Synagogues in spite of the all the opposition he was able to build the foundation of a very strong church there. Justus, a certain man whose house was next door to the synagogue, believed then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed with all his household. Also many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized. “⁹ Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, “Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; ¹⁰ for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city”. ” **Acts 18:9-10**. During the stay of Paul in Corinth he wrote his first two epistles, the first and second epistles to the Thessalonians A.D. 52, 53. During this time Felix became a Procurator Judaea A.D. 52-59.

The return trip **Acts 18:18-22**

Paul sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him, he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow. He came to Ephesus, didn’t stay for long saying “I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing”. Sailed from Ephesus to land at Caesarea, and gone up to Jerusalem.

²⁰ Areopagus or Areios Pagos is the 'Hill of Ares', north-west of the Acropolis.

This was Paul's 4th time to Jerusalem from where he went down to Antioch during the fall of A.D. 54. This was the same year when Claudius Caesar died and Nero²¹ the tyrant became the Emperor. Paul stayed at Antioch for some time before starting his third missionary trip.

Third Missionary Trip:

Documented in [Acts 18:23-21:16](#) in the period A.D. 54-58.

The going trip

- ✠ Paul started his 3rd missionary trip at Antioch in the winter of A.D. 54. He traveled by land passing by the region of Galatia and Phrygia till he arrived to Ephesus.
- ✠ At Ephesus, Paul stayed there for three years. Ephesus bore the title of “the first and greatest metropolis of Asia”. It was distinguished for the Temple of Artemis (Diana). Paul arrived to Ephesus shortly after a certain man named Apollos (contracted from Apollonius had left. Apollos was a Jew born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. He was following the teachings of John the Baptist and being fervent in spirit; he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. So he began to speak boldly in the synagogues of Asia Minor. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. Then he crossed to Achaia (currently the southern part of Greece) [Acts 18:27-19:1](#) and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. Apollos' missionary efforts at Corinth was meeting many successes but created a great division in the church. This division was between the evangelism of Paul and Peter on one side and that of Apollos on the other, and due to which Paul wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians. This epistle Paul wrote in the spring of A.D. 54 when he was at Ephesus trying to mend this division. ¹⁰ *Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.* ¹¹ *For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.* ¹² *Now I say this, that each of you says, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ.”* ¹³ *Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”* [1Corinthians 1:10-13](#). Also see [1 Corinthians 3:1-9](#) and [1 Corinthians 4:6](#).

The confidence of Paul in Apollos remained strong and asked him to revisit Corinth “*Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to come to you with the brethren, but he was quite unwilling to come at this time; however, he will come when he has a convenient time*” [1 Corinthians 16:12](#). Paul also talked about Apollos in his epistle to Titus, “*Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing*” [Titus 3:13](#).

²¹ Nero, reigned A.D. 54-68, the last Roman emperor of the Julian-Claudian line, was the son of Domitius Ahenobarbus and Julia Agrippina, niece of Emperor Claudius. After the violent death of his first wife, Valeria Messalina, Emperor Claudius married Julia, adopted her son Nero and gave him in marriage his own daughter, Octavia.

Going back to Paul who when reached Ephesus found some disciples who knew nothing but the Baptism of John and never heard about the Holy Spirit (it is most believed that they came to faith through Apollos before he received the complete faith). Hence Paul talked to them about Jesus Christ and baptized them then they were filled by the Holy Spirit and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Paul stayed with them for nearly 2 years.

“¹¹ Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them” Acts 19:11-12. Also one of the most known occurrences during the service of Paul in Ephesus was the itinerant Jewish exorcists who were casting out evil spirits by calling the name of Jesus Christ whom Paul preaches. The evil spirit ridiculed them and overpowered them [Acts 19:13-17](#). *“¹⁸ And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. ¹⁹ Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. ²⁰ So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed” Acts 19:18-20.* In spite of all great outcome of Paul’s service in Ephesus he faced great tribulations due to a great commotion lead by Demetrius the silversmith who used to build shrines to Artemis (Diana). The craftsmen sharing the same craft started a riot and seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul’s travel companions. This riot was over after the city clerk has intervened and dismissed the assembly [Acts 19:23-41](#).

- ✠ During Paul’s stay at Ephesus he planned to visit the regions of Macedonia, Achaia, Rome and Jerusalem. He sent Timothy and Erastus to Rome. During the summer of A.D. 57 he left Ephesus to the region of Macedonia (where he wrote his second epistle to the Corinthians before going to Corinth in the winter of the same year). On his way to Macedonia he passed by Smyrna, Pergamos, Assos and Troas. In the region of Macedonia he stopped by its great cities Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica and Berea. Then he traveled to Achaia (Achea), where he went to Athens, Cenchræ then to Corinth in the winter of A.D. 57. Paul stayed in the region of Achaia for three months.
- ✠ At Corinth, and its region where he stayed most of the three months and wrote his epistle to the Galatians in the spring of A.D. 58. Also wrote during the same period his epistle to the Romans in which he was so troubled by the unrighteousness of men that prevailed in Corinth, as fornication was practiced as one of the rituals to please the idols.

The return trip [Acts 20:3](#)

Paul intended to return to Syria directly traveling by sea but because of a plot arranged by the Jew he returned traveling by land through Macedonia accompanied by a number of his disciples. Paul started the return trip in the spring of A.D. 58 and after passing the region of Macedonia he traveled by sea from Philippi to Troas.

- ✠ At Troas, Paul stayed with Eutychus the young man who fell from the third story during Paul’s message, and was taken up dead but Paul embraced him after the message and he came up “and they were not a little comforted” [Acts 20:12](#). From Troas Paul traveled to Assos, then Mitylene, Samos, Miletus avoiding to go to Ephesus lest it is too late to attend the Pentecost in Jerusalem.

✠ Paul's farewell message [Acts 20:17-38](#).

From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church, and talked to them, ¹⁸ ... “You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; ²⁰ how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, ²¹ testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. ²² And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. ²⁴ But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ “And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. ²⁷ For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹ For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. ³¹ Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. ³² “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. ³⁵ I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” ³⁶ And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, ³⁸ sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship” [Acts 20:18-38](#).

From Miletus he traveled by sea to Cos, Rhodes, Patara, till they reached the port of Tyre.

- ✠ At Tyre, Paul stayed there for seven days with the disciples telling him through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. But he traveled from Tyre to Ptolemais (Akko) where he stayed for one day then left to Caesarea.
- ✠ At Caesarea, Paul entered the house of Philip the evangelist who had four virgin daughters who prophesied. As he stayed there many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea and prophesied the tribulation that Paul was intended to go through at Jerusalem. Then the brethren pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem, but “*Then Paul answered, “What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”*” [Acts 21:13](#). Thus he and his companions went up to Jerusalem, and this was his 5th time to Jerusalem. To the poor of Jerusalem he had the relief sent to them by the Greek believers.

The Jewish mob against Paul at Jerusalem:

During the Pentecost A.D. 58, [Acts 18:23-21:16](#).

When Paul arrived to Jerusalem he went to see James the Less, Patriarch of Jerusalem, and all the elders. He told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry, and when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. They also advised him to take four men and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. Then Paul took the men and followed the advice from the elders. But when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him. The Jews from Asia had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with Paul in the city; whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple. They seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut as they were seeking to kill him. The commander of the Roman garrison came near and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains and commanded him to be taken into the barracks. Near the entrance to the barracks Paul talked to the commander imploring him a permit to speak to the people. Once he was granted the permission he spoke to them in the Hebrew language.

Paul addressing the Jerusalem mob

Paul introduced himself to the people telling them about his encounter with Jesus Christ on the way to Damascus. He also told them about God guiding him to preach to the Gentiles, that's when their rage multiplied. Then the soldiers lead him into the barracks and bound him to scourge him. Then they withdrew filled with fear when knowing he is a Roman citizen. [Acts 22:27-28](#).

Paul before the Sanhedrin on the next day

Paul stood in front of the council and Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth [Acts 23:3-5](#). Paul took the advantage having Pharisees and the Sadducees attending the council and talked about resurrection of the dead. This caused a dissension to arise between Pharisees and the Sadducees. The commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks [Acts 23:10](#). *“But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome”.”* [Acts 23:11](#).

And when it was day, when more than forty men of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. They came to the chief priests and elders and asked them to suggest to the commander that Paul be brought down again so they can kill him before he comes near. Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. Then Paul sent him with one of the centurions the commander to tell him. The commander prepared a battalion to take Paul to Caesarea at the third hour of the night.

Paul seized and taken to Caesarea

This Roman commander, Claudius Lysias, sent Paul heavily guarded to Felix the governor accompanied by a letter to explain what happened in Jerusalem. The guards took Paul at night to the city of Antipatris²² from which he was escorted to Caesarea. Felix ordered him to be guarded in the palace of Herod Agrippa II.

Paul before Felix Acts 24:1-27

After five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders to give evidence to the Felix the governor against Paul. Felix allowed Paul to defend himself ¹⁵ *I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.* ¹⁶ *This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men*” **Acts 24:15-16** but Felix adjourned the proceedings to hear what would Lysias the commander say on Paul’s case.

And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla²³ *Now as Paul reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, “Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you”.*” **Acts 24:25**. Seemingly he didn’t have this ‘convenient time’ as he was relieved from the governor position in A.D. 60 and replaced by Porcius Festus. As Felix wanted to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.

Paul before Festus Acts 25:1-12

Three days after Festus had come to the province, he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem; the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul. They petitioned Festus, asking him a favor that he would summon Paul to Jerusalem while they lay in ambush along the road to kill Paul. Paul refused to go up to Jerusalem, but Festus wanting to do the Jews a favor tried to convince him to go up to Jerusalem to be judged there. Paul insistently refused saying *“I appeal to Caesar”* **Acts 25:11** *“Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!”* **Acts 25:12**.

Paul before King Agrippa and Festus the Governor Acts 25:13-26:32

King Agrippa and his sister Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus, who in turn laid Paul’s case before the king. King Agrippa II asked to hear Paul himself, and Festus granted him his request and the hearing occurred in the auditorium. Festus asked Agrippa to examine Paul together such that he may have something to write to the Caesar.

Paul’s defense before King Agrippa Acts 26

Paul started telling Agrippa about his story in finding Christ and his preaching in Judea then among the Gentiles. ²⁴ *Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!”* ²⁵ *But he said, “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason”.*” **Acts 26:24-25**. ²⁷ *King*

²² Antipatris - a city built by Herod the Great, and called by this name in honor of his father, Antipater II of Judea. It lay between Caesarea and Lydda, two miles inland, on the great Roman road from Caesarea to Jerusalem. It was identified as Aphek in **Joshua 12:18** and currently as Ras-el-Ain, where rise the springs of Aujeh, the largest springs in Israel.

²³ Drusilla, the daughter of Herod Agrippa I and sister of Herod Agrippa II.

Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe.”²⁸ Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.”²⁹ And Paul said, “I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains.” **Acts 26:27-29.**

All were convinced that Paul is doing nothing deserving of death or chains but as he appealed to Caesar, he had to appear before Caesar. Now God’s promise to Paul to bear witness for him at Rome was to be fulfilled.

Paul’s trip to Rome: Acts 27:1-28:16

Paul and some other prisoners were delivered to a centurion of the Augustan Regiment named Julius to take them to Rome. Luke the physician and Aristarchus the Macedonian accompanied Paul on the ship probably as his owned slaves as no prisoner was allowed to have any company. As there were no ships heading directly to Rome they boarded an Adramyttian ship. The trip started in August A.D. 60. A day after sailing they reached Sidon to briefly stop there and Paul was allowed to visit his friends, and then the ship continued sailing parallel to the shores of Syria and Cilicia arriving at Myra. There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy, and they boarded this ship. After sailing slowly many days having difficulty with the wind, the ship arrived with difficulty to Cnidus. Then it sailed under the shelter of Crete off Salmone passed it with difficulty it came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea. They remained there for so many days as the wind was not helping them to proceed. When the Fast was already over (the Day of Atonement, October 5th of this year) they were to decide whether to spend the winter at Fair Havens or to proceed sailing trying to reach Rome before November 11th (by this date sea storms become more strong and more often something that keeps ships from sailing till the end of March). Paul warned them from sailing during this dangerous period but the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship. They desired if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, and winter there. ¹³ *When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete.* ¹⁴ *But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon.* ¹⁵ *So when the ship was caught, and could not head into the wind, we let her drive.* ¹⁶ *And running under the shelter of an island called Clauda, we secured the skiff with difficulty”* **Acts 27:13-15.** When they had taken it on board, they used cables to under-gird the ship; and fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis Sands²⁴; they struck sail and so were driven. ¹⁹ *On the third day we threw the ship’s tackle overboard with our own hands.* ²⁰ *Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up”* **Acts 27:19-20.** Paul stood in the midst of them urging them ²² *And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.* ²³ *For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve,* ²⁴ *saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you’.* **Acts 27:22-24.** ²⁷ *Now when the fourteenth night had come, as we were driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors sensed that they were drawing near*

²⁴ The Syrtis Sands, moving sands, were an infamous “graveyard” of ships off the coast of North Africa, feared like a “Bermuda Triangle.” At all costs, the sailors wanted to avoid this area

some land. ²⁸ And they took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms²⁵; and when they had gone a little farther, they took soundings again and found it to be fifteen fathoms. ²⁹ Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come. ³⁰ And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow, ³¹ Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.” ³² Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off” [Acts 27:27-32](#). Then Paul asked them to take nourishment, and assured them that nothing is going to go wrong and all of them will be safe. When it was day, they did not recognize the land; but they observed a bay with a beach, onto which they planned to run the ship if possible. And they let go the anchors and left them in the sea, meanwhile loosing the rudder ropes; and they hoisted the mainsail to the wind and made for shore. But striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves. The soldiers suggested to the centurion to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape. But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land, and the rest, some on boards and some on parts of the ship. And so it was that they all escaped safely to land. “Now when they had escaped, they then found out that the island was called Malta” [Acts 28:1](#).

At Malta

The barbarian (as they didn't speak Greek) natives of Malta showed Paul and his companions from the ship unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire to make them warm. But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand. But Paul shook off the viper into the fire and suffered no harm. Hence the natives of Malta thought that Paul was a god. A leading citizen of the island, whose name was Publius, received Paul and his companions and entertained them courteously for three days. It happened that the father of Publius got sick of a fever and dysentery and Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him. So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came to Paul and were healed. After staying at Malta three months everyone boarded an Alexandrian ship whose figurehead was the Twin Brothers and sailed to Syracuse where it stayed for three days. From there the ship sailed and circled round to reach Rhegium that lies on the narrow canal separating the southern part and the island of Sicilia. Staying there for one day then the south wind blew to help them sail to the north and reach Puteoli on the next day. At Puteoli Paul and his companions found brethren, and were invited to stay with them seven days. From there they traveled by land toward Rome on the way they came to Appii Forum (Forum Appius) which is 43 miles from Rome. After traveling for 10 more miles they reached the Three Inns. Every city or place they passed by they found brethren to welcome them, this was a great encouragement to Paul and he presented many thanks to God. They came to Rome after 15 days from leaving Puteoli “Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him” [Acts 28:16](#).

²⁵ fathom, a unit of length equal to 6 feet (1.83 meters), used principally in the measurement and specification of marine depths.

Paul at Rome Acts 28:16-31

Paul arrived at Rome in March A.D. 61, seven or eight months after he left Caesarea. Three days after arriving to Rome Paul called the leaders of the Jews to explain to them everything about himself and his case. Then he started preaching Christ to them but they were blinded by their extremism and they did not agree among themselves so Paul said to them *“Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!”* **Acts 28:28**. This he said after reminding them of the prophecy from Isaiah ⁹ *“Go to this people and say: ‘Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; And seeing you will see, and not perceive;’* ¹⁰ *“For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them”* **Isaiah 9:9-10** also see **Acts 28:15-27**.

³⁰ *“Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, ³¹ preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him”* **Acts 28:30-31** which is the last verse in the Book of Acts discussing the life of Paul. Here is Paul spent two years in captivity at Rome from the spring of A.D. 63 to the spring of A.D. 65 preaching freely about Jesus Christ. Paul received all to talk to them about Christ while he was guarded by a soldier and kept in chains. Most probably this freedom he enjoyed in captivity was due to the report that Festus wrote about him and sent to Caesar. Paul’s life during those two years affected the guards and soldiers while they were guarding him ¹² *“But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, ¹³ so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ”* **Philippians 1:12-13**. His preaching reached many including those working at the Imperial Palace whom he reported their greetings to the rest of the brethren in his epistles *“All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar’s household”* **Philippians 4:22**.

During Paul’s captivity in Rome he wrote his epistles to the Colossians, Ephesians, and the Philippians and Philemon, these are called the “Epistles of Captivity”.

St. Paul from the spring of A.D. 63 till his martyrdom in A.D. 67 or 68

St. Luke the author of the Book of Acts stops his narrations about the life of St. Paul by the spring of the year A.D. 63. No information about the rest of his life is provided although many opinions were suggested. It is most believed that he was released from captivity which is supported by

- 1- The circumstances around him during his captivity were to serve him
- 2- The epistles he wrote during this period reflect that he was full of hope and hence joy.
- 3- In his epistle to his disciple the Bishop Titus he says *“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you”* **Titus 1:5**. St. Paul never visited Crete in any of his three missionary journeys, but in his trip to Rome the ship took a harbor there but Titus wasn’t with him **Acts 27:7-8**. This is enough evidence that he was released from captivity then went to preach in Crete and this time Titus was with him.

Accordingly a conclusion can be made that Paul spent this period as follows

- ✠ After being judged before Nero he was released from his first captivity. Then he wrote his epistle to the Hebrews somewhere in Italy (circa A.D. 63 or 64) when he was preparing to travel to the east.
- ✠ Went to Spain (as most believed) around A.D. 64 or 65 and from there he went to Asia Minor.
- ✠ Went to Crete and entrusted his disciple Titus to take care of the church there.
- ✠ On July 19th 64, the Great fire of Rome took place and Christians faced a severe persecution.
- ✠ Paul visited Ephesus then from there he left to the region of Macedonia where he wrote his first epistle to his disciple Timothy around A.D. 66 or 67 “As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine” **1 Timothy 1:3**.
- ✠ He may have went to Corinth and Miletus and spent a winter, of the year 65, 66 or 67, in Nicopolis in the region of Epirus (it is most believed that he was seized again there). “When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there” **Titus 3:12**.
- ✠ He wrote his epistle to Titus from Ephesus in A.D. 66 or 67.
- ✠ It seems that he went to Troas where he left a part of his luggage there “Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments” **2 Timothy 4:13**.
- ✠ Many believe that his was seized in Troas, from which he was taken captive to Rome to spend his second captivity. This is supported by the fact that he couldn’t collect his cloak, the books or the parchments that he asked for.
- ✠ Paul spend a second captivity in Rome where he wrote his last epistle, his second epistle to Timothy in which he says “⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” **2 Timothy 4:6-8**.
- ✠ Paul’s surrounding circumstances during his second captivity was rough. He appeared before Nero (2nd defense **2 Timothy 4:16**) who ordered Paul to be beheaded by the sword in the summer of A.D. 67 or 68.

Acts 13:2-14:28

PAUL: HIS FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

STOP	EVENT	REFERENCE						
Paphos in Cyprus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team consists of Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark. • Paul works his first recorded miracle-the blinding of Elymas. • Paul is first called by his Gentile name at this time. • Paul wins the deputy of Paphos to Christ. 	Acts 13:4-12						
Antioch in Pisidia	<p>• He preaches his first recorded message (six points and an invitation).</p> <p><i>THE POINTS</i></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>1. The Exodus deliverance</td> <td>4. The rule of Saul and David</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. The wilderness wanderings</td> <td>5. The ministry of John the Baptist</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. The conquest of Canaan</td> <td>6. Crucifixion and resurrection of David's seed - Christ</td> </tr> </table> <p><i>THE INVITATION</i></p> <p>“³⁸ Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; ³⁹ and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses” Acts 13:13-50</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many Gentiles and some Jews receive his message. • The Jewish leaders, however, reject it and run him out of town. • He then states his intention to turn to the Gentiles Acts 13:13. 	1. The Exodus deliverance	4. The rule of Saul and David	2. The wilderness wanderings	5. The ministry of John the Baptist	3. The conquest of Canaan	6. Crucifixion and resurrection of David's seed - Christ	Acts 13:13-50
1. The Exodus deliverance	4. The rule of Saul and David							
2. The wilderness wanderings	5. The ministry of John the Baptist							
3. The conquest of Canaan	6. Crucifixion and resurrection of David's seed - Christ							
Iconium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many also believe the Gospel here. • But again the Jewish leaders stir up trouble. 	Acts 13:13-14:5						
Lystra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul heals a man crippled from birth. • An attempt is made by the crowd to worship Paul and Barnabas as in Greek gods Jupiter and Mercury. • Paul refuses their honors, is stoned and left for dead. • Upon being supernaturally raised, Paul continues preaching in Lystra and surrounding cities. 	Acts 14:6-25						
Antioch in Syria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team returns to Antioch with history's first “foreign field report” by returning missionary 	Acts 14:26-28						

Acts 13:2-14:28

PAUL: HIS SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

PAUL AND BARNABAS – THEIR ARGUMENT [Acts 15:36-39](#)

- Team consists of Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark.
- Paul refuses; Barnabas and John Mark leave for Cyprus

PAUL AND SILAS – THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS [Acts 15:40-18:22](#)

STOP	EVENT	REFERENCE
Lystra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timothy joins the team • He is circumcised by Paul 	Acts 16:1-5
Troas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul is forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach in either Turkey or Bithynia • He receives his Macedonian vision • Luke now joins the team 	Acts 16:6-10
Philippi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three thrilling salvation stories – <i>A BUSINESS WOMAN, A DEMONIC GIRL, A PRISON-KEEPER</i> 	Acts 16:11-40
Thessa- lonica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul spends three weeks in the home of Jason • The gospel is once again opposed by the some unbelieving Jews 	Acts 17:1-9
Berea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Here Paul finds a group of devout Bible lovers • He is again forced to flee because of Jewish troublemakers 	Acts 17:10-14
Athens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul goes to Athens alone • Timothy and Silas are to join him later • He preaches his famous sermon at Mars' Hill <p>TITLE OF HIS MESSAGE: <i>THE UNKNOWN GOD</i> NATURE OF HIS MESSAGE: <i>THREE POINTS</i> God is the Creator of all things 17:24-29 God is the Savior of all things 17:30 God is the Judge of all things 17:31</p> <p>RESULTS OF HIS MESSAGE: <i>THREEFOLD REACTION</i> Some mocked 17:32 Some delayed 17:32 Some believed 17:34</p>	Acts 17:15-34
Corinth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla, a Christian couple, also tentmakers • Silas and Timothy now rejoin him • He states for the second time his intentions to go to the Gentiles • Crispus, chief ruler of the Synagogue is saved • Sosthenes the new synagogue ruler attempts to have Paul arrested, but is himself beaten • Paul remains here for eighteen months • He writes 1 and 2 Thessalonians from here 	Acts 18:1-18
Ephesus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He remains here but a short time • He is accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla, who remain Ephesus 	Acts 18:19-21
Antioch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He returns to his home church 	Acts 18:22

Acts 13:2-14:28

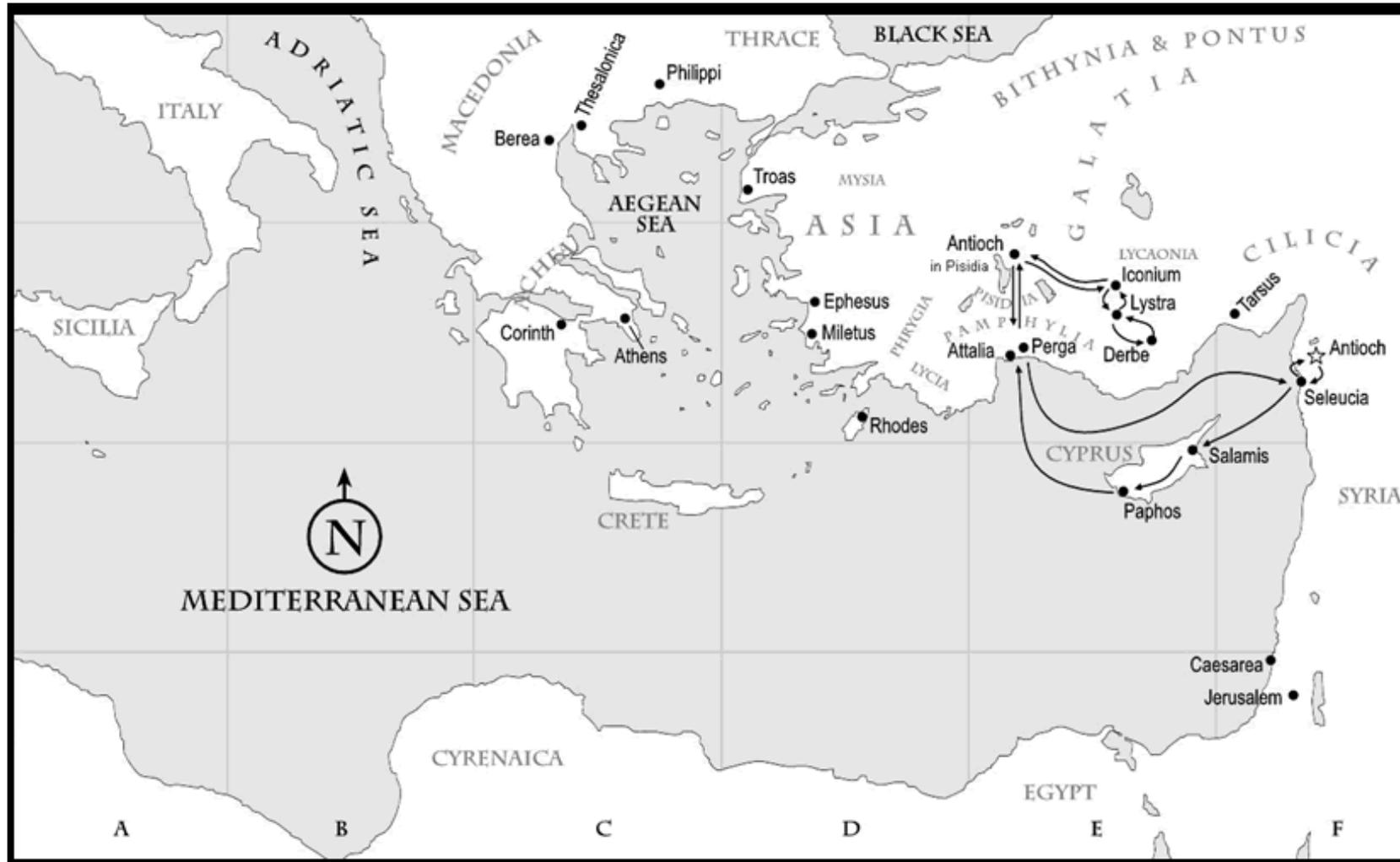
PAUL: HIS THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

STOP	EVENT	REFERENCE
Ephesus	MINISTRY OF APOLLOS IN EPHESUS AND CORINTH	Acts 18:24-28
	He knew only the message of John the Baptist	
	He was more fully instructed by Aquila and Priscilla	
	He later became pastor of the church in Corinth	1 Cor. 3:6
	MINISTRY OF PAUL IN EPHESUS	Acts 19:1-41 <i>FIVE KEY EVENTS</i>
	The disciples of John	Acts 19:1-7
	The divinations of Sceva	Acts 19:13-17
	The dedication of the converts	Acts 19:18-20
	The defenders of Diana	Acts 19:23-41
	The decision of Paul	Acts 19:21
Troas	HE RAISES EUTYCHUS FROM THE DEAD	Acts 20:6-12
Miletus	HE REVIEWS THE PAST	
	Had been with them two years	Acts 20:19, 31
	Had taught publicly and from house to house	Acts 20:20, 21
	Had declared the whole counsel of God	Acts 20:27
	Had coveted no man's silver	Acts 20:33
	Had exemplified Christ	Acts 20:35
	Was therefore pure from the blood of all men	Acts 20:26
	HE VIEWS THE PRESENT	
	His situation	Acts 20:22
	Their Situation	Acts 20:28
	HE REVIEWS THE FUTURE	
	His situation	Acts 20:24
Their Situation	Acts 20:29, 30	
Tyre	HE IS WARNED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT NOT TO GO TO JREUSALEM	Acts 21:4
Caesarea	HE VISITS PHILIP AND HIS FOUR DAUGHTERS	Acts 21:8, 9
	HE US WARBED BY AGABUS NOT TO GO TO JERUSALEM	Acts 21:10, 11

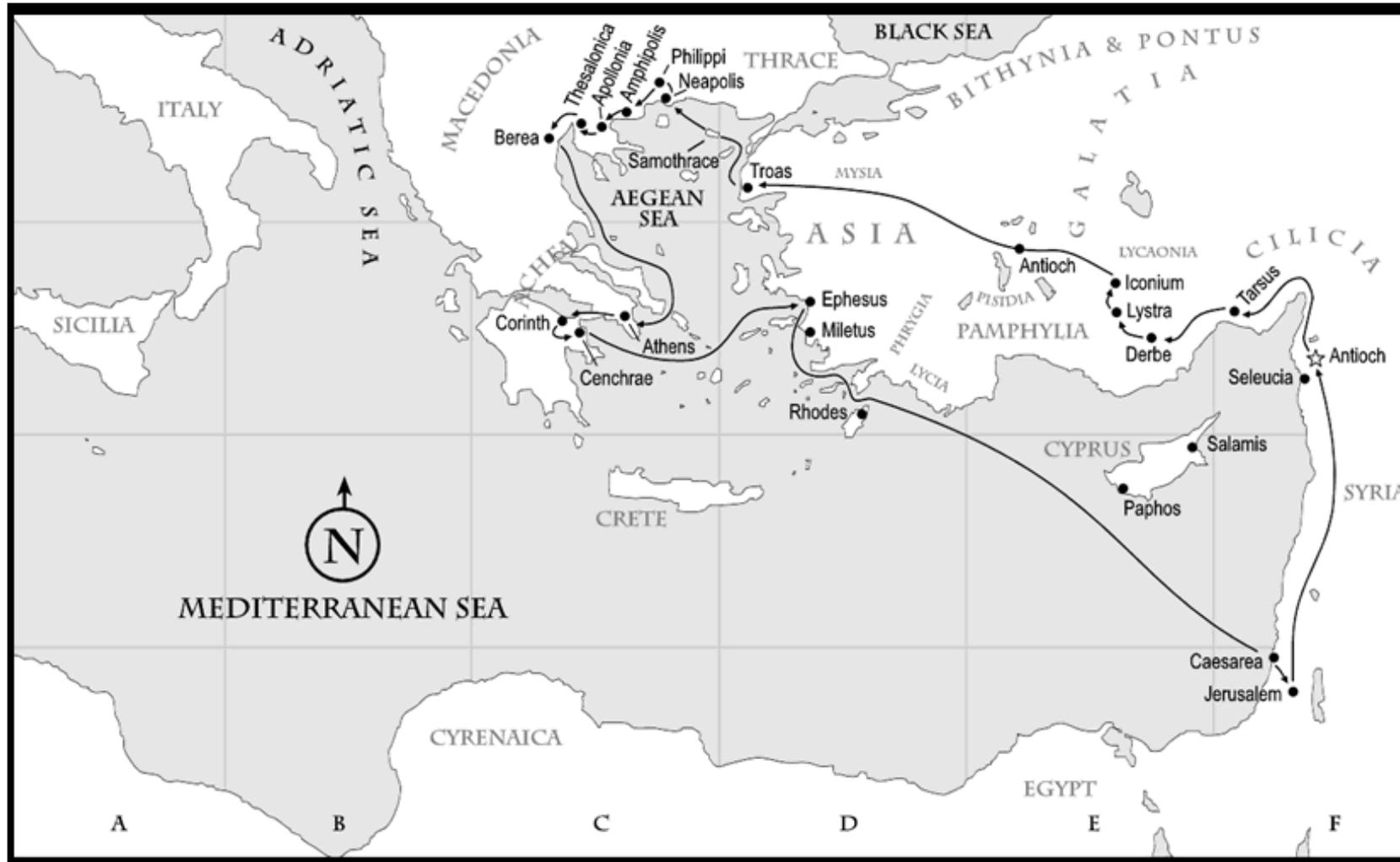
St. Paul Missionary Trips

	1 st Trip	2 nd Trip	3 rd Trip
Reference	Acts 13:1-14:28	Acts 15:36-18:21	Acts 18:23-21:16
Time	A.D. 45-50	A.D. 51-54	A.D. 54-58
Companions	Barnabas and John Mark	Silas, Timothy (joined in Lystra), and Luke (joined in Troas and stayed in Philippi)	Started alone but many joined him in different parts of the journey: Luke, Silas ... see Acts 19:23 & 20:4
Starting Point	Antioch	Antioch	Antioch
Area Covered	Cyprus (Paphos) → Perge of Pamphylia → Antioch of Pisidia → Iconium → Lystra → Derbe	Tarsus → Derbe → Lystra → Iconium → Antioch → Troas → Philippi → Thessalonica → Berea → Athens → Corinth	Lystra → Ephesus → Troas → Macedonia → Achaia
Back Trip	Backward to Perga then by sea to Syria (Antioch)	Ephesus → Antioch → Jerusalem	Achaia → Macedonia → Troas → Miletus → Tyre → Caesarea → Jerusalem
Miracles	Paphos: The blinding of Elymas (Bar Jesus) Lystra: Heals a man crippled from birth	Philippi: 1. Exercises a demon (knowing spirit) from a slave girl, 2. Miraculously released from prison	Troas: Raises Eutycus from dead
Discourse	Antioch of Pisidia	Famous Sermon on Mars Hill (Aeropagus) in Athens	Farewell discourse in Miletus
Sufferings	Jews ran him out of town, plotted against him in Iconium, stirred up the people, and stoned him and left him for death.	Imprisoned in Philippi, some unbelieving and trouble making Jews in Thessalonica opposed the Gospel and was also forced out of Berea.	Resistance and blasphemy in Corinth, was brought up before the judgment seat (Gallio, Proconsul of Achaia), experienced an up rise in Ephesus (commotion) (Diana), and was plotted against which caused him to change route
Examples of converters	Sergius Paulus (Proconsul)	Lydia, prison keeper, and Crispus (head of synagogue in Corinth)	
Epistles		1 st and 2 nd Thessalonians	Galatians – Romans, 1 st Corinthians, 2 nd Corinthians

PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY



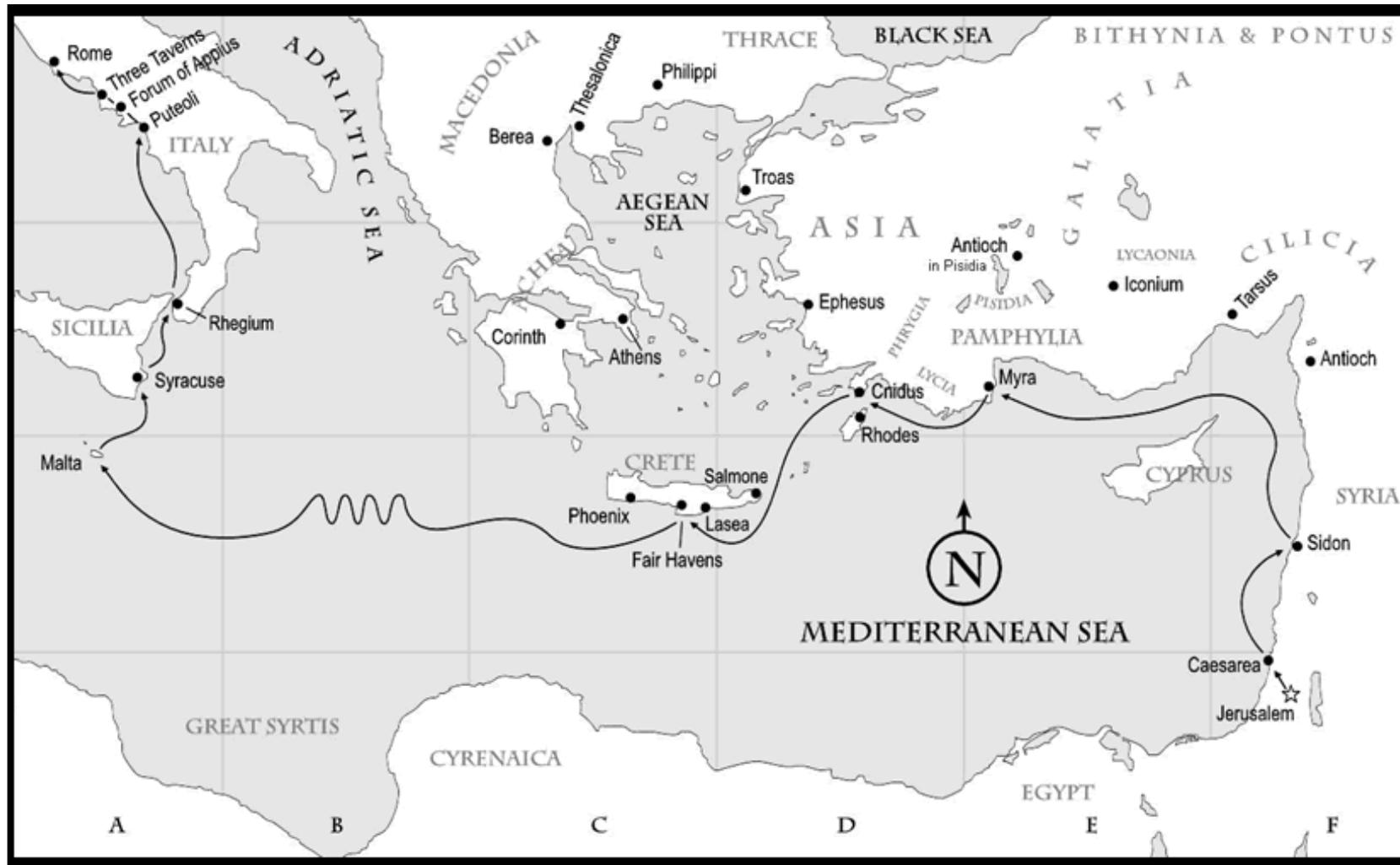
PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY



PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY



PAUL'S JOURNEY TO ROME



The Epistle to the Romans

General Introduction – New Testament Epistles

The books of the New Testament can be categorized in three sections

First section: Narrative (Historical) books, namely the four gospels and the Book of Acts.

Second section: Educational books, namely the 14 epistles of St. Paul and the 7 Catholic epistles.

Third Section: The only prophetic book in the New Testament, the Book of Revelation.

Epistles

Letters or messages being sent in a written or verbal format are called epistles. The New Testament includes 21 books documenting epistles from the apostles certain people, persons or Christians in general. Although epistles are mainly discussing directions or teachings sent to some church or a certain group of people regarding a particular issue, but they work as an every church educational tool regardless of era or country. **Romans 15:4** “⁴ *For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope*”. St. Paul wrote 14 epistles, James wrote one, Peter two, John three and Jude wrote one epistle. It is clear that the New Testament doesn't include all what the apostles wrote, but the Early Church recognized the epistles in hands to be the Canonical ones these were written through the Holy Spirit.

The place of the Epistles in relation to the Gospels and the Book of Acts

The four Gospels: includes the declaration of God to His people in the person of Jesus Christ, His teachings and His act of redemption.

The Book of Acts: includes the history of the first Church of believers who followed the teachings and commandments of Jesus Christ. This Church conserved God's declarations and witnessed for Jesus Christ the resurrected from the dead. It also documents the stages when this early Church prospered under the support and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Epistles: these include apostles' elucidation, guided by the Holy Spirit, to the teachings of Jesus Christ to help the believers to have Jesus Christ become the center of their lives and faith.

Reasons that necessitated writing these written messages (epistles)

Prophets of the Old Testaments delivered God's messages to the people verbally, also did Jesus Christ Himself (only once Elijah the prophet wrote a letter to Jehoram **2 Chronicles 21:12**), but the apostles used the writing for at least two reasons

First: Writing gives a precise explanation of ideas and teachings discussed when delivered to different churches. It is also a way of conserving the teachings and bringing the whole church together under the authority of the Holy Spirit.

Second: The spread of faith over the Roman Empire which caused a great increase in number of believers and rendered verbal teachings impossible, this necessitated the writing of letter. The widespread Greek language, a language of theology and philosophy, facilitated writing and sharing these epistles among churches. Many transportations and roads were created by the Romans reaching everywhere in the Empire facilitated sending these epistles.

Authors of the Epistles and agreement among them

As mentioned earlier the authors are Peter, John, James, Judas, and Paul. Peter wrote two, John wrote three, James wrote one, Judas wrote one, and Paul wrote 14 epistles (when associating the Epistles to the Hebrews to him). Four of the five were with Christ and followed Him (Peter, John, James, and Judas) and three were among the twelve disciples (Peter, John, and James). While Judas is a cousin of Christ according to the flesh; hence it was normal that all of the four to write more about His teachings. The fifth author is our teacher St. Paul and although he never followed Christ during His mission but Jesus Christ declared Himself to Paul appearing to him after the His resurrection. It can be said that Jesus Christ taught St. Paul directly without the need of intermediary person, **1 Corinthians 11:23** “²³ For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you ...”. Paul wrote much more epistles than the others together. It can be noticed that all the epistles, excluding the epistles to the Hebrews and the first epistle of John, declares the name of its author in the beginning and the name of the intended Church or recipient (if a person), also the epistles of Peter and Judas are addressing all believers. Each epistle starts and ends with the greetings to its recipient(s).

Apostles stated that these epistles are reporting the Word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit

1 Thessalonians 2:13 “¹³ For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe”.

1 Peter 1:12 “¹² To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into”.

St. Paul witnessed for the epistles of St. Paul being among the Holy writings **2 Peter 3:15-16** “¹⁵ and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, ¹⁶ as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures”.

Similar to the authors of the four Gospels being on one accord in documenting the life of Christ according to the flesh and His teachings, the authors of the epistles were on one accord in

representing One Christ, One Faith, One Baptism, One Salvation, One Comforter, and One Church to all believers.

Contents of the Epistles

They include detailed explanations concerning

- 1- The persons of God (Father Son, and Holy Spirit)
- 2- The nature of man and his/her duties towards community, human race, and the mutual duties of people among each others based on the teachings of Christ. In these epistles we read about: Submission to the Authorities in **Romans 8** and **1 Peter 2:13**, also about clergy and laymen in the epistles to the Thessalonians **1 Thessalonians 2:12-13** and Hebrews, **Hebrews 13:7, 17**. Wives and husbands in **Ephesians 5:21-33**, **Colossians 3:18**, and **1 Peter 3:1**. Parents and Children in **Ephesians 6:1**, **1 Timothy 5:4**, **Colossians 3:20**. Slaves and masters **Ephesians 6:5**, **Colossians 3:22**, **Colossians 4:1**, **Titus 2:9**, and **1 Peter 2:18**.
- 3- Epistles present important teachings related to Salvation presented by our Lord Jesus Christ explaining many aspects the disciples could not understand before the Resurrection as in **John 16:12**. More examples such as the teaching concerning the nature of Divinity, the redemptive death of Christ for our sins and His resurrection to resurrect us with Him. Also about Preaching to the Gentiles and the plan of one Church under God. It can be said that Jesus Christ, His Divinity and Humanity, and redemption through His blood is the center of these epistles.

Remarks to make best benefit of studying the epistles

Epistles do not form a series of writings focusing on certain topics, but the Holy Spirit guided their authors to write regarding certain matters according to Church needs and necessity of discussion. As a consequence we find the contents of the epistles are vitally useful to all churches in all times although when they were written they targeted certain churches and their needs. This leads to the importance of knowing the circumstances at which any epistle was written to reach the best understanding of its contents. The study of any epistle should be preceded by studying its circumstances, recipients, historical facts, etc. It is also good to read the epistle in its entirety several times to be able to see its general theme then start on detailed study of its parts.

Order of epistles in the New Testament

It should be noticed that the epistles were not put in historical order but according to importance and length of each. A table of epistles is presented

Epistle to the Romans

#	Epistle	Place of Writing	Time of Writing	Remarks
1	1 Thessalonians	Corinth	A.D. 52-53	Second Missionary Trip (Paul)
2	2 Thessalonians	Corinth	A.D. 52-53	Second Missionary Trip (Paul)
3	1 Corinthians	Ephesus	A.D. 57	Third Missionary Trip (Paul)
4	2 Corinthians	Macedonia	A.D. 57	Third Missionary Trip (Paul)
5	Galatians	Corinth	A.D. 58	Third Missionary Trip (Paul)
6	Romans	Corinth	A.D. 58	Third Missionary Trip (Paul)
7	Ephesians	Rome	A.D. 61-63	First Captivity in Rome (Paul)
8	Philippians	Rome	A.D. 61-63	First Captivity in Rome (Paul)
9	Colossians	Rome	A.D. 61-63	First Captivity in Rome (Paul)
10	Philemon	Rome	A.D. 61-63	First Captivity in Rome (Paul)
11	Hebrews	Italy	A.D. 63/64	
12	1 Timothy	Macedonia	A.D. 63/64	
13	Titus	Ephesus	A.D. 63/64	
14	2 Timothy	Rome	A.D. 67/68	
<u>Catholic Epistles</u>				
1	James	Jerusalem	A.D. 60/61	Before the destruction of Jerusalem
2	1 Peter	Babylon	A.D. 63/67	Before the destruction of Jerusalem
3	2 Peter	Babylon	A.D. 67	Before the destruction of Jerusalem
4	Judas	Jerusalem	A.D. 98/70	
5	1 John	Ephesus	A.D. 90/100	
6	2 John	Ephesus	A.D. 90/100	
7	3 John	Ephesus	A.D. 90/100	

The Epistles of our teacher St. Paul

The Pauline Epistles

St. Paul truly worked harder than all of the apostles **1 Corinthians 15:10** ^{“10} *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me*”. Not only worked hard preaching the word but in leaving a great treasure of 14 epistles to the church as well. Paul sent his epistles to some of the churches he founded (Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossi, and Thessalonica) and the rest to people (Timothy, Titus, and Philemon). He wrote these epistles during his missionary trips or during his captivity (to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and to Philemon). Despite his captivity or weariness a great sense of faith, hope and happiness is found in all of them. His last epistles he wrote during his captivity too, 2 Timothy, where he concluded in a spirit of victory although was already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time had come for his departure **2 Timothy 4:6**.

Paul wrote his epistles over a period of 12 to 14 years (between A.D. 52-67), The Church has accepted these epistles that we still hold in our hands as books inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Remark: Paul commonly used the same greeting to begin all his epistles, a greeting that included two words “Peace and Grace”. It is mostly believed that Paul used the help of someone to write for him all his epistles **Romans 16:22** due to his weak eyesight. On the other hand he signed a greeting in his handwriting (in large letters) at the end of each epistle; he spoke of this greeting saying it is a “distinguishing mark” **2 Thessalonians 3:17**.

The Epistle of our teacher St. Paul to the Romans

To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints

It is the sixth book among the books of the New Testament written by St. Paul in A.D. 58 sent from the city of Corinth (The manuscript of epistle is ended by the phrase “Wrote to the people of Rome from Corinth by the hands of Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea”). He wrote the epistle at the end of his third missionary trip (A.D. 54-58) returning to Jerusalem taking collected financial donations collected to help needy saints of Jerusalem **Romans 15:25-26** ^{“25} *Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there.* ²⁶ *For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem*”.

The epistle was sent with Phoebe, a servant (deaconess) of the church in Cenchrea from Corinth **Romans 16:1-2** ^{“1} *commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant[a] of the church in Cenchrea.* ² *I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me*”.

Paul longed for many years to visit Rome **Romans 1:10-12** ^{“10} *in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.* ¹¹ *I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—* ¹² *that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith*” **Romans 15:23** ^{“23} *But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you*”.

As his mission in the east was fulfilled he meant to visit Rome when he was going to Spain after delivering financial donations to the needy in Jerusalem **Romans 15:24** ^{“24} *I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while”*. It is known that things didn't go as Paul planned for he was captured in Jerusalem and remained in Caesarea for two years (A.D. 58-60) then he wanted to Rome, as a captive, where he spent two years in captivity (A.D. 61-63). During this period of captivity he was able to provide a successful service there **Acts 28:30, 31** ^{“30} *Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him,* ³¹ *preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him”*. He was never able to visit Spain till he was set free in A.D. 63.

The Church of Rome, how it was founded

It was not directly founded through the efforts of one of the apostles as it can be understood generally from the epistle to the Romans and the Book of Acts, leaving no doubts that **none** of the apostles went to Rome and preached the word of God there.

It is possible that the church there was founded by a number of believers to whom the name of Christ was preached, as those who listened to Peter's sermon on the Pentecost in Jerusalem **Acts 2:10**. Some others have listened to Paul during his missionary trips. It is well known that during the time of Gospels lots freedom and ease of transportation within the Roman Empire were allowed, this was for so many reasons among which is trading. Without doubt among those people moving between the parts of the Empire there were Christians from great cities where Paul has preached such as Antioch, Ephesus, and Corinth. Taking into consideration Chapter 16 of the epistle to the Romans where Paul is sending his greetings to many believers although by he hadn't visit Rome yet. These believers meant by Paul's greetings believed in Christianity during his preaching in the cities of Asia, Macedonia and Achaia (Achea) then they went to Rome.

But how did Paul knew about the Church of Rome, and how did he knew of them being there?

No doubt this was through Aquila and Priscilla whom he met in Corinth (Aquila and Priscilla, who were from Rome but settled down in Corinth after the decree by Claudius Caesar commanding all the Jews to depart from Rome, A.D. 52) they were also tentmakers and he stayed with them. That's why when he wrote the epistle to Rome he said **Romans 16:3-4** ^{“3} *Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus.* ⁴ *They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them”*. Hence the Church of Rome can be associated to those two saints and to the works of the “church that meets at their house” **Romans 16:5, 1 Corinthians 16:19, Acts 18:2, 24-26, 2 Timothy 4:19** this is concluded as Paul witnessed Aquila and Priscilla were explaining the way of God more adequately **Acts 18:26**.

Members of the Church of Rome

The Church of Rome was formed of two groups,

- a- Christians who were Jews, and
- b- Christians who were of the Gentiles

As St. Paul was some times talking to the Jews mentioning Abraham and the inherited sin through Adam [Romans 4, 5:12](#), and some other times talking to the Gentiles about the disobedience of Israel and acceptance of Gentiles [Romans 11:30](#). It is most accepted that the majority of Christians in Rome were of the Gentiles as the Jews were always opposing the new faith while the Gentiles embraced it. Paul pointed out to this opposition and rejection of the faith by the Jews in [Romans 9, 10, 11](#).

The purpose of writing this epistle

Paul sent his epistle to Rome to prepare for his visit and let the believers to be ready for this visit. In addition that he knew much about this Church through Aquila and Priscilla so he decided to answer their questions as he always did in his epistles. Great evidence that the believers in Rome were looking forward to meeting with Paul showed when many of them went to meet with him as soon as they heard the news of his arrival [Acts 28:13-15](#). It is unfair to limit the objective of this epistle to this single reason as the epistle is considered one of the most educational epistles of St. Paul,

- ✠ The epistle to the Romans lays down all the vital facts of Christianity showing the valuable character of St. Paul
- ✠ Paul in this epistle presented Christ, who He is, and what is His redemptive act, providing an important doctrine that man is justified not through the works of the Law but through his faith and the Grace of God. Doctrine
- ✠ Paul also meant to support believers to be steadfast in faith; this practical purpose of the epistle extends from [Romans 12 to 16](#).

The epistle was sent from the east (Greece) to the west (Rome) and included the apostle's teachings about the "path of salvation".

Subject and contents of the epistle

The main subject of this epistle is Justification by faith working through love

Paul summarized this subject in the verse [Romans 1:16](#) ¹⁶ *"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile"*. He wasn't ashamed of the gospel as he experienced its power.

Paul presented this epistle, as in most of his epistles, in two main parts

First Part: Theoretical or Doctrinal [Romans 1 to 11](#).

Second Part: Practical [Romans 12 to 16](#).

First, the Doctrinal part, Romans 1 to 11 including,

1. An explanation of salvation, giving examples (Abraham and Adam) [Romans 1 to 5](#)

- ✠ The Gentiles sinned and couldn't be justified through the works of Law according to nature **Romans 1**
 - ✠ The Jews sinned and couldn't be justified by the works of Mosaic Law **Romans 2 and 3**
 - ✠ Hence salvation is based on being justified by the faith in Jesus Christ **Romans 3:21 to 4**
 - ✠ Then Paul gives to examples from the Old Testament about justification by faith
 - i. Abraham justified by faith **Romans 4**
 - ii. Adam justified by faith **Romans 5**
2. Justification through faith provides us peace with God
- ✠ "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we[a]have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"
 - ✠ About the way for justification and its results, St Paul says **Romans 5:6, 8, 10** "⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly...⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us...¹⁰ For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!"
 - ✠ The fruits of justification are "peace", "access into grace", and "rejoice in God" as the justification,
 - i. Frees us from sin **Romans 6:2-4** "² By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life".
 - ii. Frees us from the authority of the Law **Romans 7:4-6** "⁴ So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. ⁵ For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. ⁶ But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code".
 - iii. Gives us the Spirit of sonship to God **Romans 8:1-2** "¹ Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death". **Romans 8:14-16** "¹⁴ because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children".
3. Discussed "God's chosen people"

Paul departed from the main subject of the epistle to discuss the idea of God's chosen people **Romans 9 to 11**. For they have fallen due to the lack of their faith and that they have to become believers one which will be the greatest blessing to the world. Paul explained that salvation is for everyone, Jews and Gentiles, based on the choice by grace **Romans 9:7**. About the generality of faith in **Romans 10:11-13** ¹¹ *As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame."* ¹² *For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,* ¹³ *for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved".*

Second, the practical part, **Romans 12 to 16**,

Applying justification and sanctification to daily life, justification is not a theoretical doctrine but to be applied in everyday life and requires sanctification of the heart and the life to serve God. **Romans 12:1** ¹ *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship*". Understanding this straightforward requirement and comparing it with the contents of **Romans 6**, eradicates the claims that justification by faith leads to the release of lusts.

In this practical part of the epistle Paul provided many teachings and directives that benefit all Christians in their mutual cooperation as members of one Church and loyal citizens (addressing Submission to the Authorities) **Romans 13:1-2** ¹ *Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves*".

The closure,

He wrote apologizing for reminding them **Romans 15:14-16**, gave them a summary about himself and his work **Romans 15:17-21**, promised them to visit **Romans 15:22-29**, asked for their prayers **Romans 15:30-33**, sent his greetings to many **Romans 16:1-16**, warned them of those who cause divisions **Romans 16:17-20**, reporting the greetings of his fellows **Romans 16:21-23**, and close by asking them grace and glorifying God **Romans 16:24-27**.

The problem of (choice) as explained in **Romans 9**,

Paul started discussing this problem (of choice) presenting the clear contradiction between children of the flesh and children of the promise. Presenting examples for this as Sarah gave birth to Isaac according to the promise and Rebecca embraced the word of God to have children with Isaac **Romans 9:11-13** ¹¹ *Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: ¹² not by works but by him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger"* ¹³ *Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated".* Although God has the absolute freedom to accept or reject but this absolute freedom doesn't contradict with His absolute justice, and holiness. God never overlook men's strive but Paul, answering the Jews, wanted to show

God's unlimited powers. This with the talk about Jacob and Esau **Romans 9:13** ^{“13} *Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated”.*” and God's decision according to His prior knowledge (He doesn't have past, present and future as the man, but all is revealed and present in front of God). He saw Jacob's good deeds and Esau's evilness and this is not according to choice but according to His precognition **Romans 9:14** ^{“14} *What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all!”*. Paul referred to the prophecy of Malachi in **Malachi 1:1-3** ^{“1} *An oracle: The word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi.* ² *“I have loved you,” says the LORD. But you ask, ‘How have you loved us?’ “Was not Esau Jacob's brother?” the LORD says. “Yet I have loved Jacob,* ³ *but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his mountains into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals”.*” to point out to the fulfillment of God's promises in Justice.

Paul then pointed out that God treated His people according to His choice and will **Romans 9:15-16** ^{“15} *For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion”* ¹⁶ *It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy”*. This doesn't mean that God's mercy applies to who don't deserve it or He has compassion on those who are unworthy but we have to understand that God's choices are not excluding men's behavior and their deeds. Paul also mentioned in **1Corinthians 3:7** ^{“7} *So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow”*, this statement requires “one who plants” and “one who waters” and God makes things grow.

Also Paul pointed out to Gods ways with Pharaoh in **Romans 9:17-18** ^{“17} *For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: “I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth”* ¹⁸ *Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden”*. This means that the choice of Pharaoh was according to God's divine plans but doesn't mean that God wanted to change Pharaoh and hardens his heart, Pharaoh's sin is associated to him.

Understanding the problem of choice when explained by Paul becomes simple when we see the motive behind his statements that seemed to undervalue man's work.

The motive: The denial of the Jews to God's sovereign powers, denying that God's acceptance of the gentiles. Paul wanted to report a message to them “God is sovereign and his powers are unlimited and unconstrained. God's justice and righteousness always guarantees to acknowledge man's strive and work. Paul continued **Romans 9:19** ^{“19} *One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?”.*” a reason that will make the judgment of Pharaoh be unfair. Then Paul answered this in **Romans 9:20** ^{“20} *But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’.*” Paul made it clear that there is no argument against God's plans and choices which he pointed out too in **2 Timothy 2:20** ^{“20} *In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble”*.

Paul presented a similarity between God and the potter **Romans 9:21** ^{“21} *Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?”*. The potter has all the freedom to form the clay to form different pottery, but the potter has the “experience” to choose the kind of clay that suits the purpose

prepared for. Hence the sovereign powers of God let Him choose men according to their works.

God's wants all to be saved and all to know the truth and us use or misuse our given freedom to become "different clays" **2 Timothy 2:21** ²¹ *If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work*". Then Paul said **Romans 9:22** ²² *What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction?*", meaning that God bore with great patience so as not to show his wrath on that potter, then why won't He give His mercy to the other potter that deserves it **Romans 9:23** ²³ *What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory*". In this the object of mercy is meant to be us who were not of the Jews but Gentiles **Romans 9:24-26** the same conclusion can be seen in **Hosea 2:23** ²³ *Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, and I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; Then I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they shall say, 'You are my God!'*". Paul also pointed to Isaiah's prophecy **Isaiah 10:22** ²² *Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved"*." and the remnant, i.e. the Gentiles will be saved.

The great city of Rome

† Was built by Romulus in 753 B.C., and he became its first king.

† It was the capital of the Roman Empire, located at the river Tiber 15 miles from the Mediterranean Sea. It is mostly believed that 1,200,000 people lived in Rome at the time when the epistle was written half of them were slaves brought by Pompey when he invaded Syria. Pompey let them live in a portion of the city but they didn't remain as slaves for a while, they became free and multiplied. Upon the death of Herod the Great a committee of Jews arrived to Rome to plead to Augustus Caesar and 8000 Jewish people came to meet them proving that the slaves brought to this city were free and became many. Only during the reign of Tiberius Caesar (A.D. 19) and Claudius Caesar (A.D. 49-52) they were exiled away from Rome.

† Peter and the city of Rome

The Catholics claim that Peter the disciple of Christ is the founder of the Church of Rome and he was its first Bishop living there for 25 years (A.D. 42:67, till the year of his martyrdom). There are no historical facts to support this claim; on the contrary many evidences defy this claim

1. The Church of Rome is of the Gentiles not of the Jews and it is known that Peter was entrusted for the gospel of circumcision **Galatians 2:7-9**. While Paul was entrusted for the gospel to the Gentiles, and Ananias informed Paul about God's will for him to preach before the Gentiles **Acts 9:15**, **Acts 22:18-21**, and God told Paul that he will witness in Rome **Acts 23:11**.

2. In Paul's epistle to the Romans he mentioned a principal he followed **Romans 15:20** ^{“20} *It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation”*. On the other hand the epistle shows his longing to visit Rome to serve there, he finally went there staying for 2 full years in a house he rented and preached to those visited him. This is enough evidence that Peter wasn't there between A.D. 61 and 63.
3. In chapter 16 of the epistle Paul sent his greetings to many of the early Christians (both of the Jews and the Gentiles). It unreasonable to believe that Peter was in the city and Paul didn't greet him and add his name to the top of his long list.
4. When reading the epistle we notice him addressing the believers there **Romans 1:7** ^{“7} *To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints ...*” hence recognize that there was not any apostolic Church there during this time (A.D. 57 or 58). Then Paul promised to preach to them **Romans 1:15** ^{“15} *That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome”*. Surely they were not preached by any of the apostles, neither Peter nor any other apostle.

† More evidence that Peter has never been in Rome before or after Paul's epistle

a- Before writing the Epistle to the Romans

1. It is proven historically that till the Council of Jerusalem, A.D. 51, Peter was still in Judea and he went later to Antioch (Galatians 2:11)
2. Claudius Caesar decreed all the Jews to leave Rome (A.D. 49-52), and Luke documented this in the Book of Acts 18:2. Christianity during this time was considered a Jewish denomination hence it was impossible for Peter to be in Rome during the effective period of this decree.
3. It is mostly believed that Peter escorted his wife during his missionary trips till A.D. 57, the same year when Paul wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians from Ephesus saying **1 Corinthians 9:5** ^{“5} *Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas (Peter)”*. These trips were to the regions for which Peter addressed his first epistle.

b- After writing the Epistle to the Romans

1. No sign that Peter was in Rome during A.D. 61-63 when Paul was there, as Luke didn't mention him in the Book of Acts. Peter staying in Rome for full 25 years and founding a church in the capital of the Empire would have been a very important event to document by Luke, if it is true.

Accordingly, the claim of St. Peter staying in Rome in A.D. 63 is impossible, but the probability of him to go there later is not much supported.

The Church tradition agrees that St. Peter martyred in Rome circa A.D. 67, during the reign of Nero. Many historians documented that he was seized far away from Rome but brought there to trial. The same thing happened to Ignatius the Bishop of Antioch who was brought from Antioch to Rome to be thrown to the beasts in A.D. 107. This agrees with what Eusebius documented according to Origen that “Peter was crucified at Rome with his head downwards”. Others claimed that Peter went to Rome to rebuke Simon the

magician. Whatever the reason was, Peter didn't go there to preach the Romans or to found a church there as Paul was the founder. Peter went there during the lat year of his life and this opinion is supported with many scholars

The Epistles to the Corinthians

The First Epistle of our teacher St. Paul to the Corinthians

Contents

Introduction: **Ch1:1-9**

Paul introduces himself – In the prologue he commends the believers and thanks God for the gifts He bestowed upon them.

First Section: **Ch1-Ch4** Reproaching the Corinthians for the divisions among them and defending his service **Ch1:10-Ch4:21**

Many divisions among the believers and seemingly they formed separated groups, one group says “We’re of Paul” the second says “We’re of Apollos” the third says “We are of Cephas” and the fourth says “We are of Christ” **Ch1:12, 3:23, 11:18**. As a result Paul asked them “*Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*” **Ch1:13** and “²¹ *Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours: ²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come—all are yours. ²³ And you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s*” **Ch3:21-23**.

Paul also defended himself and his ministry **Ch4**.

Second Section: A number of rules and set of advices related to the social life of the Corinthians **Ch5-Ch10**

- a- Sexual immortality and adultery and the necessity of evading evil doers, **Ch5**.
- b- A man and his father’s wife, the little leaven, “*put away from yourselves the evil person*” **Ch5:13**, and all the problems faced the Corinthians.
- c- Disputes among Christians were judged by non-Christian lawsuits, St. Paul spoke them about the must of judging their disputes by saints, **Ch6:1-11**.
- d- Reiterated the sexual immorality issue and the reasons for which it is unlawful, **Ch6:12-20**.
- e- Marriage versus celibacy, **Ch7**.
 - † Married life and its rights, **Ch7:1-9**.
 - † The necessity of not breaking the marriage sacrament, **Ch7:10-24**.
 - † Leading a celibate life and its advantages, **Ch7:20-38**.
 - † Second marriage, **Ch7:39-40**.
- f- Relationships between believers and pagans, **Ch8-Ch10**. The food sacrificed to the idols, Christians were invited by non-believers for special feasts, and St. Paul enticed them not to lead the weak into temptation or sin “*Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall*” **Ch8:13**.

- g- Revisit his defense for his ministry showing that he didn't use his freedom in a way that may lead others into temptation, **Ch9**. "*Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord?*" **Ch9:1**. "*Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible*" **Ch9:19**.
- h- Dealing with non-believers, baptism into Moses in the cloud and the sea, Idol Feasts and the Lord's Supper, "*Everything is permissible for me*" **Ch6:12**-.

Third Section: Propriety in Worship, Spiritual gifts, overlooking love as the foundation of leading a spiritual life **Ch11-Ch14**

- a- Propriety in Worship, **Ch11:2-34**.
 - ✠ Some of the believers allowed their wives to pray with their heads uncovered (following the ways of unbelievers) **Ch11:2-16**.
 - ✠ Accepting the sacraments while unworthy **Ch11:17-34**. Waiting for each others, as the rich used to speak out of what food they brought while the poor starve.
- b- Spiritual gifts **Ch12:Ch14**.
 - ✠ The nature of a Spiritual Gift and the purpose of which **Ch12:1-1**.
 - ✠ Different gifts resembling different members in the same body **Ch12:19-31**. They were seeking these gifts ignoring love which lead St. Paul to tell them "*But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way*" **Ch12:31**. Love is the way he discussed in depth in chapter 13; some calls this chapter the Symphony of love".
 - ✠ A comparison between speaking in the tongues and prophesying **Ch14:1-25**.
 - ✠ What needs to be followed when using Spiritual Gifts **Ch14:16-....**

Fourth Section: The resurrection of the dead **Ch15**

There was some doubting the resurrection from death hence St. Paul explained in detail the resurrection of Christ as proof for the resurrection of the dead and a way for our resurrection.

- a- Supporting proofs to believe in resurrection, **Ch11:2-34**.
 - ✠ Proofs related to the resurrection of Christ and His appearances after resurrection **Ch15:1-28**.
 - ✠ Proofs drawn from the life of apostles and believers **Ch15:29-34**.
- b- The resurrected bodies, explained nature **Ch15:35-58**.
 - ✠ Nature of resurrected bodies **Ch15:35-50**.
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- a- Collections to the people of Jerusalem **Ch16:1-4**.
- b- His plans to visit **Ch16:5-9**.

- c- News and counsel [Ch16:10-18](#).
- d- Greetings [Ch16:19-21](#).
- e- Curses on who doesn't love the Lord [Ch16:22](#).
- f- A request for grace and show of love [Ch16:23-24](#).

The City of Corinth



It was the capital of Achaia, the Achaean League, in Greece. It was a famous city spanned 40 miles away from Athens in a strip of land 10 miles in width. Corinth had two ports “Kenkhreai” 9 miles to the east and “Lechaion” 2 miles to the west. The circumference of the city was 5 miles, to the south of the city there was a hill on top of which a temple of Aphrodite was. Corinth was a center of trade hence a center for luxury and science. In spite of all its wealth Corinth was famous for immoral behavior. It was said about a man “he lived in Corinth” to state his immoral ways, and a woman is called “Corinthian woman” to refer to her bad reputation. In the same location lies today the famous village of Corinth as the old city was destroyed by an earthquake. The search efforts lead to the location of the Seat of Gallio the Roman proconsul of Achaia concurrent to St. Paul [Acts 18:12](#). Also the search effort located the meat market mentioned by St. Paul in [1 Corinthians 10:25](#) “*Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience’ sake*”. Also some inscriptions were discovered mentioning Erastus the treasurer of Corinth concurrent to St. Paul and same person mentioned in [Romans 16:23](#).

The visits of St. Paul to Corinth and his ministry there

1. Corinth was the last stop in St. Paul’s second missionary trip where he stayed for 18 months (A.D. 52-54). He preached Christ there, met with Aquila and Priscilla and had a vision of the Lord to support him. To Corinth Apollos went preaching too.
2. St. Paul visited Corinth for the second time towards the end of his third missionary trip staying there and its vicinity for 3 months during the winter of A.D. 57.

3. To the Corinthians he wrote two Epistles in A.D. 57. The first he sent from Ephesus and the second followed after few months from Macedonia. This was during his third missionary trip and before arriving to Corinth.
4. Some support the opinion that St. Paul visited Corinth a third time between the abovementioned two visits. After this visit he wrote them an epistle after the first epistle and before the second one, this epistle wasn't kept. This theory is based on the following verses:
 - ✠ **1 Corinthians 16:5-7** ⁵ *Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am passing through Macedonia).* ⁶ *And it may be that I will remain, or even spend the winter with you, that you may send me on my journey, wherever I go.* ⁷ *For I do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits*
 - ✠ **2 Corinthians 12:14** *Now for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children*
 - ✠ **2 Corinthians 13:1** *This will be the third time I am coming to you. 'By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.'*
 - ✠ **2 Corinthians 1:15** *And in this confidence I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit*
 - ✠ **2 Corinthians 2:1** *But I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow*

Supporters of this opinion see that these verses can't be pointing out to his first visit during which he founded the church there, but to the second short visit occurred between the 2 major ones.

Accordingly people defending this opinion outline chronological order of events as follows

- ✠ St. Paul learned about many problems the Corinthians suffered after sending Timothy and Titus from Ephesus through Macedonia as supported by the following verses, and hence he wrote his first epistle to them
 - **1 Corinthians 4:17** *For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church*
 - **1 Corinthians 16:10** *And if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do*
 - **Acts 19:22** *So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time*
- ✠ There were no positive results due to the neither first epistle nor Timothy's visit. Opinions denying St. Paul the rights of his mission arose in the church of Corinth that made him defend himself in his second epistle saying
 - **2 Corinthians 10:7** *Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ's, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he is Christ's, even so we are Christ's* **2 Corinthians 10:10**

- “For his letters, they say, are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible”*
- **2 Corinthians 11:23** *“Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often”*
 - **2 Corinthians 12:15-16** ¹⁵ *And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved. ¹⁶ But be that as it may, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you by cunning!”*
- ✠ Due to this denial and rejection St. Paul had to leave to Corinth to deal with these problems himself. This visit was disappointing to him so he said **2 Corinthians 2:5-...** *“But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent—not to be too severe ...”* Upon this Paul returned to Ephesus and from there he wrote an epistle to the Corinthians and sent it with Titus arranging to meet with him later in Troas, **2 Corinthians 2:12-13** ¹² *Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord ¹³ I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia”*
- ✠ This imply that St. Paul didn’t meet with Titus in Troas so he headed to Macedonia where they met (or maybe in Philippi) and heard from him about the circumstances in Corinth. This short epistle that Titus delivered was the one between the first and second epistles to the Corinthians. **2 Corinthians 7:5-7** ⁵ *For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears. ⁶ Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, ⁷ and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more”*
5. Some believes when reading **1 Corinthians 5:9-11** ⁹ *I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. ¹⁰ Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. ¹¹ But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person”* that St. Paul wrote an epistle to the Corinthians preceding to his first canonical epistle to them, and again it wasn’t kept.

The Church of Corinth and St. Paul

Chapter 18 of the Book of Acts points out to St. Paul’s visit to Corinth after departing from Athens during his second missionary trip. The same Chapter documents the call from God to St. Paul to serve in this city **Acts 18:9** *“Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent”*. St. Paul remained for 18 months teaching and preaching in this city this will make him the founder of this church.

Some Jews departed to this city after the decree made by Claudius commanding all the Jews to depart from Rome, among those was Aquila and Priscilla **Acts 18:3**. In Corinth there was a synagogue for the Jews where Paul reasoned with them every Sabbath persuading both Greeks

and Jews [Acts 18:4](#). Although the Corinthians opposed Paul [Acts 18:6](#) many believed in the Lord [Acts 18:7-8](#) among the believers was the Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue with all his household [Acts 18:8](#). The Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision to strengthen him [Acts 18:9-10](#), and he continued staying there for a year and 6 months [Acts 18:11](#). The Jews drove Paul to Gallio's judgment seat but Gallio took no notice of their claims [Acts 18:12-16](#). After these long stay Paul departed to Syria taking with him Aquila and Priscilla [Acts 18:18](#).

The Book of Acts documents Apollos preaching in Corinth [Acts 19:1](#). Apollos was a Jew born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. He was following the teachings of John the Baptist and being fervent in spirit; he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately [Acts 18:24-26](#).

Despite the fact that the news Paul received from Corinth was unpleasant, he commended the believers in the introduction of his epistle [1 Corinthians 1:1-7](#).

Date and location of writing the first epistle to the Corinthians

Paul wrote this epistle towards the end of the three years he spent in Ephesus [1 Corinthians 16:8](#) "*But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost*". A conclusion can be made that the epistle was written in the spring of A.D. 57 [1 Corinthians 16:8, 9, 19, Acts 19](#). the message was delivered, as shows in its footnote, by Timothy, Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus.

Direct motive behind writing the epistle

The unpleasant news reaching Paul concerning the division among the believers from Jews and Gentiles was the reason. Some took the side of Paul and some took the side of Cephas others for Apollos and the rest for Christ. The Corinthian Church was founded by Paul then Apollos visited the city causing some to take his side as he was well versed and mighty in the Scriptures, then came some from Jerusalem wanting to make the Christians a sect from the Jews. Those coming from Jerusalem claimed that Paul had no rights to teach about freedom and denied him his apostolic rights adding that his teachings are contradicting with those of Cephas (Peter the Apostle) [Ch1-Ch4](#).

The objective of the epistle

St. Paul desired to answer the problems suffered by the Corinthians, replying their concerns [1 Corinthians 7:1](#) "*Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me...*". These concerns included marriage versus celibacy. He also addressed issues regarding their news that he received [1 Corinthians 1:11](#) "*For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you*". [1 Corinthians 5:1](#) "*It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you ...*".

He also discussed the virtues of love in his Symphony of Love [Ch13](#).

He used the resurrection of Christ as a solid proof for the resurrection to the dead explaining how resurrection takes place.

St. Paul mentioned the reasons (problems) made him write the epistle and suggested solutions to each problem

1. Sexual immorality "*... that a man has his father's wife!*" [1 Corinthians 5:1](#).

2. Some believers followed the ways of unbelievers in allowing their wives to pray with their heads uncovered **1 Corinthians 11:5, 1 Corinthians 6**.
3. Judging conflicts by unbelievers lawsuits **1 Corinthians 6:1**.
4. Christians were invited by non-believers for special feasts, and St. Paul enticed them not to lead the weak into temptation or sin **1 Corinthians 10:27, Ch 8**.
5. When they eat together and each one takes his own supper ahead of others, the poor were left hungry **1 Corinthians 11:20-21**.
6. They didn't seek Propriety in Worship but wanted to gain spiritual gifts overlooking love which is the source of each virtue **1 Corinthians 12:28**. He told them "*But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way*" **1 Corinthians 12:31**. This "more excellent" way is love discussed in the Symphony of Love, **Ch13**.
7. To those who had doubts regarding the resurrection of the dead St. Paul explained issues pertaining the resurrection of Christ and our resurrection through Him in **Ch15**.
8. Divisions among them that lead contradicting opinions and groups, each group associated itself to Paul, Apollos, Cephas, or Christ. In his reply Paul said "*Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*" **1 Corinthians 1: 13**.
9. He warned them from accepting the sacraments while unworthy lest they receive them for their judgment **1 Corinthians 11:23-32**.
10. He explained to the Corinthians all what's related to
 - a. Marriage **Ch5-Ch7**.
 - b. Eating of things offered to idols **Ch8-Ch9**.
 - c. The Lord's Supper **Ch10-Ch11**.
 - d. The proper worship **Ch11**.
 - e. Spiritual gifts **Ch12-Ch14**.
 - f. Resurrection **Ch15**.
 - g. Collecting for the poor and many other issues **Ch16**.

The Second Epistle of our teacher St. Paul to the Corinthians

Contents

The epistle was written by St. Paul in the year A.D. 57 few months following the first one. Paul wrote the epistle from a city within the region of Macedonia as shows in the following verses

- ✠ **2 Corinthians 7:5** "*For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears*".
- ✠ **2 Corinthians 8:1** "*Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia*".

- ✠ **2 Corinthians 9:2** “for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority”.

Features of the epistle

This epistle acquires very special features

- ✠ It is considered one of the most personal epistles. It never happened that St. Paul talked about himself in any other epistle more than this one.
- ✠ Studying this epistle we can see many aspects of Paul’s character.
- ✠ In this epistle Paul defends his apostolic rights and authority as an apostle of Christ against those who opposed him considering him of less order than other apostles. He wrote “For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles” **2 Corinthians 11:5**, “Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place” **2 Corinthians 2:14**, “Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you?” **2 Corinthians 3:1**, “Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart” **2 Corinthians 4:1**, “We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain” **2 Corinthians 6:1**, and “Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you” **2 Corinthians 10:1**.
- ✠ St. Paul also mentions all the troubles and pains he went through for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. These hardships that were a source of his pride “We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair” **2 Corinthians 4:8**, “But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses” **2 Corinthians 6:4**, and “Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often” **2 Corinthians 11:23**.
- ✠ In this epistle Paul for the first time described the appearance and declarations of the Lord declared to him when he was caught up to the third heaven. This was 14 years before writing the epistle **2 Corinthians 12:1-4**.
- ✠ In this epistle we witness many sides of the strong and lucid personality of St. Paul. We see him sometimes replying sharply to his opponents and in others asking to deal in lean and compassion with sinners.

The objective of the epistle

News Titus brought back from Corinth was the main motive and focus of the second epistle. Some of the news was pleasant as the majority of the Corinthians decided the punishment of Paul’s offender “⁵ But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent—not to be too severe. ⁶ This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, ⁷ so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. ⁸ Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him. ⁹ For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are

obedient in all things. ¹⁰ *Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ,* ¹¹ *lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices”* **2 Corinthians 2:5-11.**

St. Paul didn't directly leave to Corinth but sent Titus carrying the second epistle asking the Corinthians the collect as much as they can for the poor of Jerusalem. He also tried to remove each doubt regarding himself and justifying changing his course and postponing his visit. ¹ *For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ ...* ⁴ *For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you”* **2 Corinthians 1:5-2:4.** He also wanted to recognize their good feelings towards both of Titus and him ⁶ *Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus,* ⁷ *and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more”* **2 Corinthians 7:6-7.**

In this epistle St. Paul wanted to address all sorts of problems suffered by the Corinthians to avoid meeting unpleasant events during his visit as happened earlier *“But I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow”* **2 Corinthians 2:1.**

Those of the Corinthians who apposed Paul were considering him inferior to other apostles, he replied this saying *“For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles”* **2 Corinthians 11:5,** *“I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing”* **2 Corinthians 12:11.** He described his oppositions ¹³ *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.* ¹⁴ *And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.* ¹⁵ *Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works”* **2 Corinthians 11:13-15** and *“Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast”* **2 Corinthians 11:18** and as well *“Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ's, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he is Christ's, even so we are Christ's”* **2 Corinthians 10:7.**

But who were the Corinthians opposing St. Paul? And what precisely were their claims? This can't be accurately specified although some say they were Christians of the Jewish origins but no discussion can be found in the second epistle to the Corinthians similar to the one Paul provided in his epistle to the Galatians answering Christians who were originally Jews. Others go to the saying that they were from the Hebrews of Palestine as Paul pointed out to them saying *“Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I”* **2 Corinthians 11:22.**

The Epistle to the Galatians

The epistle of our teacher St. Paul to the Galatians

St. Paul wrote this Epistle to the Churches of Galatia [Gal 1:2](#) and it is the only epistle that addressed not a single person or a single church but a number of churches.

Galatia

Ancient Galatia was an area in the highlands of central Anatolia in modern Turkey. Galatia was bounded on the north by Bithynia and Paphlagonia, on the east by Pontus and Cappadocia, on the south by Lycaonia and Cappadocia, and on the west by Phrygia and Bithynia



Map of Ancient Galatia

Galatia was named so after the immigrant Gauls from Galia, comprising present-day France. Those immigrants settled in Galatia circa 280 B.C.

Politically

The boundaries and borders of Galatia were changing whether by increase or decrease. Although Galatia was a Roman colony early second century B.C. but enjoyed some sort of independence. The last Galatian kings (who died 35 B.C.) expanded the state towards the south occupying Phrygia and Lycaonia and the Galatians continued this expansion and by the year 7 B.C. they brought in more states such as Paphlagonia and Pontus making some sort of union under the name “The semi-independent Galatia”.

Hence the word Galatia during the apostolic era meant the expanded Galatia and some of its famous cities were Ancyra (modern Ankara), Pessinus, and Tavium.

Based on the above historical perspectives, two opinions concerning the identity of Galatia that St. Paul addressed his epistle to,

- 1- Some believe it is the original geographic Galatia (not the politically expanded one).
- 2- Others support (most common) that the churches of Galatia included the geographic Galatia adding to it all the areas St. Paul visited in his First missionary trip including Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (e.g. the politically expanded Galatia)

St. Paul Visits

According to the most commonly supported opinion in identifying the churches of Galatia

- 1- St. Paul in his first missionary trip (A.D. 45 - A.D. 50) visited and founded the churches of Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe [Acts 13, 14](#) and according to this opinion they are meant to be recipients of the epistle to the Galatians as well.
- 2- St. Paul re-visited the same churches in the beginning of his second missionary trip together with Silas and Timothy they visited the neighboring regions [Acts 16:6](#) “*Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia*”
- 3- St. Paul visited for the third time [Acts 18:23](#) “*After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples*”

During these visits he used to collect donations for the saints of Jerusalem [1 Corinth 16:1](#) “*Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do*”

- ✠ St. Paul mentioned in [2 Timothy 4:10](#) “*...Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia*” some see that St. Paul here used Galatia to refer to the Galia (present-day France)
- ✠ St. Peter included the Galatians among the believers intended to receive his first epistle [1Peter 1:1](#) “*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia*”

Date and location of writing the epistle to the Galatians

Again two opinions concerning this subject as well

- 1- Some believe St Paul wrote it from Ephesus in the beginning of his third missionary trip shortly after departing Galatia. St. Paul stayed in Ephesus for 3 years accordingly this epistle was written circa A.D. 55. In [Gal 1:6](#), [Acts 18:23](#), [Acts 19:1](#).
- 2- Most commonly others support that the epistle was written from Corinth after departing Ephesus towards the end of St. Paul's third missionary trip, A.D. 57. He stayed in Corinth for 3 months and it is most commonly believed that the epistle to the Galatians was written during the Spring of A.D. 58. This date agrees with the date of writing the epistle to the Romans which was dispatched as well from Corinth, adding to this that both epistles raised many common issues.

The purpose of writing the epistle

After St. Paul has preached salvation among the Galatians and they upheld the faith taking the straight path of faith a number of teachers of Jewish origins came to them. These teachers didn't contest Christianity but believed that it should channels into Judaism. Hence they taught that who believes in Christianity should follow Judaism first by following the Law of Moses regarding circumcision and other virtues. This teaching contradicted with the teaching of St. Paul so these teachers interdicted St. Paul and created suspicion in St. Paul's apostolic rights. According to them he wasn't directly called by Jesus Christ, and hence he is less than the 12 disciples. It seems that St. Paul met some of them when he visited Galatia so he was reminding the Galatians in the epistle saying **Gal 1:9** "As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed"

During the time of writing the epistle the resistance of these teachers increased and they spent more efforts in deviating the believers from the straight path of faith. St. Paul in this epistle warned the Galatians from these teachings and clearly wrote

Gal 3:1 "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?"

Gal 3:3 "Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?"

Gal 4:9-11 "⁹ But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? ¹⁰ You observe days and months and seasons and years. ¹¹ I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain"

Gal 4:17 "They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them"

Gal 4:7, 8, 10

Accordingly the objective of writing this epistle can be summarized as

- 1- St. Paul defending his apostolic rights (**Gal 1:1, 2:21**)
- 2- Warning against these unorthodox teachings from the Jews

Contents

Introduction: **Ch1:1-10**

First Section: **Ch1:11-Ch2:21** confirming his apostolic rights

1. The origins of his call, mission and teachings **Ch1:11-24**
2. His service and mission confirmed by the disciples **Ch2:1-21**
 - a. Agreement among him and the disciples regarding his service and his call **Ch1:1-10**

- b. The originality of his service and his position from St. Peter the disciple who was to blame **Ch2:11-21**

Second Section: Ch3-Ch4 between the law and the gospel

- 1. The Law brings a Curse, but blessing is through faith **Ch3:1-14**
 - a. The experience of the Galatians **Ch3:1-5**
 - b. The Old Testament made faith a condition for salvation **Ch3:6-14**
- 2. Not through Law but promises we receive blessings – the Law leads us to Christ **Ch3:15-29**
 - a. The promises given to Abraham wasn't through the Law **Ch3:15-18**
 - b. The works of the Law in leading to salvation **Ch3:19-29**
- 3. Those who were enslaved by the Law are set free through faith **Ch4:1-31**
 - a. Christ freed us from being slaves to the Law **Ch4:1-7**
 - b. Reproaching the Galatians and confirming the feelings of the majority **Ch4:8-20**
 - c. The main theme of the history of Israel and Isaac proves the shortage in keeping the law **Ch4:21-31**

Third Section: Practical set of advices Ch5:1-Ch6:10

- 1. It is not right to trade liberty with captivity **Ch5:1-26**
 - a. Circumcision doesn't help, only faith strengthen **Ch5:1-12**
 - b. Between the soul and body **Ch5:13-26**
- 2. Special advices **Ch6:1-10**
 - a. The spirit of gentleness **Ch6:1-5**
 - b. Be generous and do good **Ch6:6-10**

Closure: Ch6:11-18

- 1. In conclusion ... **Ch6:11-17**
- 2. Closing greetings **Ch6:18**

The Crucifixion in the Epistle to the Galatians

In contradiction with those who believe in following the Law by word to attain salvation, St. Paul highlighted the importance of God's grace and the power of the cross in Jesus Christ upon which worthiness to salvation relies. He made it clear to everyone showing the multiple grace and blessings of the cross:-

1. **The power of Jesus' cross in remission of sin**

Gal 1:4 *“who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father”*

Gal 2:20, 21 ²⁰ *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.* ²¹ *I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain*

Gal 3:22 *“But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe”*

2. The power of Jesus’ cross in redemption from the curse of the Law

Gal 3:13 *“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”)”*

3. The power of Jesus’ cross in salvation from selfish life

Gal 2:20 *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me”*

Gal 5:24 *“And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires”*

4. The power of Jesus’ cross in salvation from the world

Gal 6:14 *“But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world”*

5. The power of Jesus’ cross in the second birth

Gal 4:4-7 ⁴ *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,* ⁵ *to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.* ⁶ *And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!”* ⁷ *Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ”*

6. The power of Jesus’ cross in receiving the Spirit

Gal 3:14 *“that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith”*

7. The power of Jesus’ cross in the fruits of the Spirit

Gal 5:22-25 ²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* ²³ *gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.* ²⁴ *And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.* ²⁵ *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.* ²⁶ *Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another”*

❖ Hence it clearly shows how did Paul witness to Jesus’ cross in details as if they witnessed the crucifixion themselves

Gal 3:1 *“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?”*

❖ He speaks about the offense of the cross

Gal 5:11 “And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased”

❖ Then he speaks about being partners in Jesus’ cross

Gal 6:17 “From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus”

❖ And repeats the title of the epistle

Gal 3:11 “... for “the just shall live by faith”

The Churches of Galatia

Two theories regarding the exact location of the Churches of Galatia

6. North Galatia Theory (The geographic Galatia)
7. South Galatia Theory (The politically expanding Galatia)

1. North Galatia Theory (The geographic Galatia)

According to this theory the churches of Galatia are confined to the geographical state of Galatia.

Some Arguments in Favor of North Galatia

I- Those who are in favor of this theory see that it is not correct that St. Paul use the word Galatians to refer to the people of Phrygia, Pisidia and Lycaonia because this is the name given to the immigrant Gauls who dwelled there.

Some disagree with this argument and consider it not supported as the Roman state of Galatia was founded by 25 B.C. Hence 75 years would have passed by the time St. Paul wrote his epistle which may support that he wrote it to the churches in the politically expanded Galatia.

II- People in favor of this theory claim that it is incorrect that St. Paul pointed to the Churches founded by him and Barnabas as if he solely founded them. Also some disagree with this claim too as this epistle was written after the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas concerning St. Mark. It is expected that some sort of share allocation has been made allowing St. Paul to take credit for his share.

III- The Book of Acts mentioned Pisidia and Phrygia as geographic locations not political states. This means that St. Paul used Galatia as a geographic location as well. Those who disagree with this claim say that St. Paul may have used it in the book of Acts to refer to a geographical location but in the epistle to refer to a political state, there is nothing against multiple use of the word.

IV- In the Book of Acts there was distinction between Pisidia and Phrygia as we read in **Acts 16:6** “Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia” or **Acts 18:23** “After he had

spent some time there, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples”, this is a weak claim based on a wrong explanation of **Acts 16:6** “...Phrygia and the region of Galatia ...” “Φρυγιαν Και Γαλατικην Χωραν” as it can be translated as “the Phrygo Galatic Region” and **Acts 18:23** “...the region of Galatia and Phrygia ...” “Την Γαλατικην Χωραν ΚαιΦρυγιαν” as it can refer to “Phrygia Galatica” or Greater Phrygia “Phrygia Magna”

Among those who supported the arguments of North Galatia are Weiss, Davidson, Godetand and Lightfoot.

2. South Galatia Theory (The politically expanding Galatia – Roman Galatia)

According to this theory the churches of Galatia are located in the geographical state of Galatia and other regions such as Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe not excluding any church St. Paul has founded in any of these regions.

Some Arguments in Favor of South Galatia

- I- St. Paul used to address churches he founded using some common feature among them. Following this context he pointed out to the churches of Asia **1 Corinth 16:19** Macedonia **2 Corinth 8:1** and the churches of Achaia **2 Corinth 1:1**. Not only him did that but also St. Peter when he used Galatia **1 Peter 1:1** in terms of the politically expanded one.
- II- It is sure that St. Paul has founded a number of churches in Roman Galatia, as we read **Acts 13, 14** but there is no sure saying about founding any church in North Galatia **Acts 16:16**
- III- The epistle to the Galatians calls to remember the poor **Gal 2:10** and collect for them, and in the first epistle to the Corinthians **1 Corinth 16:1** St. Paul mentioned having given orders to the churches of Galatia to take part in collecting for the saints ... What does Galatia mean here?

It is clear in the epistles of St. Paul that the churches of Galatia **1 Corinth 16:1**, Macedonia **2 Corinth 8:1, 9:2** and Achaia **Romans 15:26** made donations for such a purpose, and from **Acts 20:4** that representatives from Asia followed St. Paul to Jerusalem according to the donation system he established **1 Corinth 16:3-4** “³ And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴ But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me”. So considering that Galatia here meant Roman Galatia means that all the churches he founded took part in this act. On the other hand if Galatia meant North Galatia only this would imply that the churches of Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe didn’t contribute in collecting for the poor. This will be hard to accept as some of those representatives mentioned in **Acts 20:4** are Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe and Timotheus of Lystra.

- IV- St. Paul mentioned in **Gal 4:13-14** “¹³ You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first. ¹⁴ And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus” which makes it clear that St. Paul suffered some physical illness during his first missionary efforts in Galatia. This will bring up the possibility that St. Paul may have gone to this

state for treatment but the road across North Galatia doesn't lead to any place that fits for treatment; also the weather in the North Galatia is not really suitable. A plausible explanation of this can be, during the visit of St. Paul to Pamphylia he got ill and then asked for treatment in Antioch of Pisidia known for its better climate.

V- In the epistle to the Galatians St. Paul mentioned Barnabas repeatedly as if he is well known to the Galatians [Gal 1:1, 9, 13](#), and it is well known that Barnabas was helping St. Paul in preaching to the churches of South Galatia while he didn't join him to his trips to North Galatia.

Accordingly those who are in favor of the South Galatia theory can be sure that St. Paul wanted to include all the churches of South Galatia or Roman Galatia (the politically expanded Galatia)

Among those are Renan, Hulseath, Zohn, Baljon and Ramsay.

The Galatians Congregation

- ✠ The majority of the believers were from the Gentiles while it had some minority of the Jews, this can be inferred from [Acts 13-14](#).
- ✠ The Gentiles sought after the truth [Acts 13:42, 46, 48 & Acts 14:1](#) while the Jews were divided, some accepted the word from St. Paul [Acts 13:43 & Acts 14:1](#) and others rejected with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming [Acts 13:45, 50 & Acts 14:2, 5, 19](#).
- ✠ St. Paul pointed out in his epistle to many faith related problems associated to both of the Gentiles and the Jews [Gal 3:23, 25, 28 & Gal 4:8](#) and speaks to the Jews saying “^{3:23} *But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed*” and to the gentiles “^{4:8} *But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods*” and to both “^{3:28} *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus*”.
- ✠ It appears that most of the Greek congregation of Galatia were for some time intruders into the Jewish faith and took part in the discussions in the Synagogue [Acts 13:43 & Acts 14:1](#). Also looking at the content of the epistle it can be seen that they had enough knowledge of the Jewish history and Law.

The Canonicity of the Epistle

It is worth noting that there is not even a single doubt regarding neither the canonicity of the epistle nor in considering St Paul to be its author. This is due to the strong internal and external evidences supporting both.

External evidence

1. Many of the church fathers used this epistle in their sermons, writings and letters, among those Fathers

- ✠ Polycarp: A disciple of St. John the disciple of the Lord, St. John made him a Bishop of Smyrna present-day Izmir-Turkey. Compare the epistles of Polycarp (III-III) with [Gal 4:26](#), Poly (V:III) with [Gal 5:173](#) and Poly (V:I) with [Gal 6:7](#).
 - ✠ St. Justin the Martyr: He suffered martyrdom during the reign of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus (A.D. 161-169) and among his writings are "Apology" addressed to Marcus Aurelius; "Discourse to the Greeks"; another discourse called "A Refutation"; "Treatise on the Divine Monarchy"; a book called "The Psalmist"; "Treatise on the soul"; "Dialogue against the Jews" and "Dialogue with the Jew Tryphon". Compare the "Dialogue with the Jew Tryphon" against the epistle to the Galatians.
2. In the Muratorian²⁶ Canon and the old translations of the New Testaments
 3. The epistle is mentioned among the works of St. Paul in the writings of
 - ✠ Irenaeus: The Bishop of Lynos and the disciple of Polycarp the disciple of St. John the disciple of the Lord. He wrote a treatise in five books, commonly entitled "*Adversus haereses*", and devoted, according to its true title, to the "*Detection and Overthrow of the False Knowledge*", see (III, VI, V)²⁷, (III, XVI, III) and (V, XXI, I).
 - ✠ St. Clement of Alexandria
 4. In the Canon of Marcion²⁸ (a heretic who admitted the Canonicity of the epistle)

Internal evidence

1. St. Paul mentions his name in the prologue of the epistle and leaves a sign of him at the closure [Gal 6:11](#) "*See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!*"
2. The content of the epistle and the way it treats issues regarding the Jewish believes and evaluates it in terms of the Christian faith all witness that the author is a well educated Jew well versed in both Law and philosophy and can never be anyone other than St. Paul. This is also clear in other writings of St. Paul.

²⁶ This is a fragment that includes the canonical books; it was called so because the first one to publish was the Italian L.A. Muratori (1672-1750), it is a part of a manuscript that was kept in the Ambrosian Library in Milan. Originally it was kept in Bobbio, and it is dated back to at least the year A.D 170

²⁷ Reference (Book #, Chapter #, Passage #)

²⁸ Marcion was son of the Bishop of Sinope in Pontus, born c. A.D. 110, evidently from wealthy parents.

3. The similarity between this epistle and other epistles of St. Paul that lies in using a number of specific words

#	Word	Epistle to the Romans	Epistle to the Corinthians	Epistle to the Galatians	The rest of the Pauline Epistles
1	Abraham	9 times	Once in 2 Corinth	9 times	–
2	Uncircumcision ακροβυστια	3 times	Twice in 1 Corinth	3 times	3 times
3	Justified δικαιουν	15 times	Twice in 1 Corinth	3 times	Twice
4	Cease καταργειν	6 times	9 times in 1 Corinth	3 times	4 times
5	Offspring σπερμα	9 times	Once in 1 Corinth	5 times	Once
6	Law νομος	67 times	8 times in 1 Corinth	32 times	6 times

Adding to this many more examples revealing the common style used in this epistle and other Pauline epistles.

Criticism of the Epistle to the Galatians

In spite of the previous set of evidence a German thinker, Bruno Bauer, disapproved of the canonicity of the epistle. For a long time Bruno Bauer was the only one to question the authenticity of this epistle but since 1882 the Dutch school of Loman and Van Manen joined him, followed by Friedrich Engels in Germany. The principal reason for doubting it is the supposed impossibility of so rapid a development of the contradiction between Judaism and Christianity as this epistle presupposes. But the facts do not permit us to doubt that the conflict did occur then, while in the second century it had died out.

The Epistle to the Ephesians

The epistle of our teacher the St. Paul to the Ephesians

The City of Ephesus:

The word “Ephesus” is Greek and means “desired”. Ephesus was a renowned great City, the capital of the Roman province of Asia (Asia Minor) or modern Turkey. It was three miles away from the sea, facing the Island of Samos. Ephesus had an industrial district on the sea. Ephesus fell under the Roman dominance in 133 BC.

Besides the fame of Ephesus as an important port, it had its religious fame for its magnificent temple of Artemis, for the goddess Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The goddess Diana was among the famous Greek and Roman Gods. It took 220 years to build this temple, and then it was burnt by a silly man for the sake of his own fame; hence the saying, “he who could not build a basket was able to destroy a magnificent temple.” Only the foundation of the temple remains. Historians tell us that the temple’s dimensions at the times of the Apostle Paul were as follows: 342 feet long X 164 feet wide. It had one hundred marble columns, each 55 feet tall. The most talented Greek artists had decorated the inside of the temple of Artemis.

Evangelism of the Apostle Paul in the City of Ephesus:

1. The Apostle Paul visited Ephesus for the first time during his return from his second journey (51-54 AD). He was accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila, whom he had left behind in Asia (Ephesus) to carry the responsibility of witnessing to Christ. As for Paul, after he had called with the Gospel of Christ in the Jewish Synagogue, he left Ephesus in a hurry to attend the Pentecost feast (54 AD) in Jerusalem (Acts 18:19-21).
2. During his third missionary journey (54-58AD), the Apostle Paul re-visited Ephesus and remained there three years (not less than 2 years and 3 months) (Acts 19). Paul kept on preaching the Christian faith in the Jewish Synagogue, in the school of Tyrannous, and in private houses (Acts 19:8-10 & 20-22).

Paul’s ministry in Ephesus had great success in spite of the fierce resistance by some. Though the Ephesians were controlled and plagued by idolatry, magic, and false fables, many believed and burned their sorcery books (Acts 19:19).

During his third missionary journey, Paul was resisted in Ephesus by Demetrius, a silversmith, and many similar craftsmen who made silver shrines for the temple of Artemis, and whose occupation was threatened because of the preaching of Paul (Acts 19:23-41).

Note: Archeologists discovered silver shrines of this temple similar to what Demetrius and others craftsmen did (Acts 19:24). Also the theater where the craftsman rushed and rioted against the Christians was discovered (Acts 19:29). It is among the largest theaters that

remained of the ancient world, and has 66 rows of seats, and has a capacity of 24,500 persons.

The Apostle Paul wrote his first Epistle to the Corinthians during his second visit to Ephesus in the spring of 75AD.

During the return of the Apostle Paul from his third missionary journey, and when he arrived in the City of Miletus opposing Ephesus from the sea, he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the Church and urged them to take care of the flock (Acts 20:17-38).

We are told that the Apostle Paul visited Ephesus for a third time after being freed from his first imprisonment in Rome. He left Timothy there to pastor the progress of work in the Church.

History of the Church and the Christians in Ephesus:

The Apostle John spent the last years of his life and ministering in Ephesus. He wrote the Book of Revelation in the island of Patmos, facing Ephesus. The Book of Revelation contains a letter from Christ to the Church of Ephesus, praising and warning them (Revelation 2:1-11). The City afterward became an important Christian center, and the third Ecumenical Council was held in it in 431 AD.

Presently, only ruins are left of the City that the Turks call Ephesus (the Turks overtook the City in 1308 AD); thus meeting the fate warned off in Revelation 2:4,5.

Date and Place of Writing the Epistle:

The Apostle Paul wrote this Epistle while in prison (prisoner of Jesus Christ) in Rome, during his first imprisonment there, between 61 and 63 AD. Many facts in the Epistle clearly indicate that this is a captivity Epistle:

- “Because of this, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ for you Gentiles” (Ephesians 3:1).
- “I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received” (Ephesians 4:1).
- “For which (the Gospel) I am an ambassador in chains, so that I may have the courage to speak as I must” (Ephesians 6:20).
- Saint Paul says to the believers of Ephesus, “So I ask you not to lose heart over my afflictions for you; this is your glory” (Ephesians 3:13).
- “I am sending him (Tychicus) to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us and that he may encourage your heart” (Ephesians 6:22).

Also compare this verse to Colossians 4:7, “Tychicus my beloved brother, trustworthy minister and fellow slave in the Lord, will tell you all the news of me.”

Also compare this verse to Philemon 12 & 13, “I should have liked to retain him (Onesimus) for myself, so that he might serve me on your behalf in my imprisonment for the Gospel.”

Also compare this verse to Philippians 1:12-14, “I want to know, brothers, that my situation has turned out rather to advance the Gospel, so that my imprisonment has become well known in Christ throughout the whole praetorian and to all the rest, and so that the majority of the brothers, having taken encouragement in the Lord from my imprisonment, dare more than ever to proclaim the word fearlessly.” Thus we notice the great resemblance between the Epistle to the Ephesians and the Epistle to the Colossians. We will deal in with this subject in our study of the Epistle to the Colossians.

We may conclude from the above that these four Epistles – Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon – were written in the same period, and from the same place. The Apostle Paul wrote them during his first imprisonment in Rome around 61-63 AD.

There is a secondary opinion appealing that the apostle Paul wrote the three Epistles to the Ephesians, to the Colossians, and to Philemon in his imprisonment in Caesarea between 58 and 60 AD. This opinion, however, does not bear great fundamentals.

To whom it was addressed:

The apostle Paul wrote his Epistle to “the holy ones who are (in Ephesus) faithful in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 1: 1). Studies also that (in Ephesus) appears in only some, but not in all, manuscripts. Thus an argument arose as to whom it was addressed, and who they are! “In Ephesus” appears in all old manuscripts except the Sinai and the Vatican ones, where it was added later.

Some claim that it was not sent to the Ephesians, among them Basil the Great who died in 379 AD, and Tertullian. Old Church tradition, however, definitely address the Epistle to the Ephesians. This is according to the Muratory Affidavit, according to Saints Ireneus and Clements of Alexandria, and to the scholar Origen.

There is another later opinion, and it has some weight, stating that this Epistle was a “circular letter” or an encyclical, intended for all the Churches of Asia. And since Ephesus had the dominant Church in the province, tradition attributed the Epistle to the Ephesians. These scholars explain that a space after “who are” was left to write in it the name of the City. That is, the sentence was written as follows: to the holy ones who are..... faithful in Christ Jesus. Thus Tychicus, the bearer of the letter, or any other bearer, wrote many copies of it and filled in this space the name of the Church to be addressed to; and the Church in Ephesus was the dominant one it was sent to.

According to this latter opinion, Ephesians is the letter referred to by the Apostle Paul in Colossians 4: 16 when he said, “And when this letter is read before you, have it read also in the Church of the Laodiceans, and you yourselves read the one from the Laodicea.”

The theme of this circular letter does not contain a specific situation, but is rather a general teaching Epistle in the form of a sermon.

Purpose of the Epistle:

Nothing in the Epistle indicates that it was written in response to some specific situations in the churches of Asia Minor. It appears that the Apostle Paul sent the letter with Tychicus and Onesimus on their way to Colossae (Colossians 4: 7-9) when he heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus and of their love toward all the saints (Ephesians 1:10).

Saint Paul intended to let the Asians churches know of his situation, “So that you also may have news of me and of what I am doing, Tychicus, my beloved brother and trustworthy minister in the Lord, will tell you everything. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us and that he may encourage your hearts.” (Ephesians 6:21,22)

This strengthens the bond of faith and unity between the Churches. It consoles the heart of the believers and encourages them to stand fast and grow spiritually.

We may say that the Epistle to the Ephesians is contemplation in two divisions:

1. **An Education Section (Chapters 1 to 3):** This section deals with the unity of the believers who constitute the Church, the body of Christ, though they are persons of many races. Saint Paul stresses that the Lord Christ is the head of this body or the Church, “And He (the Father) put all things beneath His (Christ) feet and gave Him as head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of the One who fills all things in every way” (Ephesians 1:22-23).

Saint Paul also says, “the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, bring about the body’s growth and builds itself up in love (Ephesians 4:16).

The Apostle Paul also says, “Therefore, remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh -- who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands -- that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, [that is,] the law of commandments [contained] in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man [from] the two, [thus] making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner[stone,] in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple

in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:11-22).

2. **A Practical Section (Chapters 4 to 6):** This section consists of the ethical admonitions to Christian life and family and community relationships.

We notice that the Epistle was sent from the West (Rome in Europe) to the East (Ephesus in Asia Minor). The Apostle included in it his full teachings of God’s plan for human history. One might say that the Epistle’s reached the epic of the Apostle’s divine teachings.

Major Theme of the epistle:

The theme of the Epistle is the establishment of the Church, the whole of the redeemed.

The Epistle summarizes all previous teachings of the Apostle in order to show the purpose of the Father in sending His Son to the world, redemption for His chosen Nation. It also opens the door fully to the Gentiles to the grace that is in Jesus Christ. This appeal shows to the world the richness of the grace of God, and clarifies that “salvation is by faith”.

In the opening statement of the Epistle, the Apostle blesses God for all His heavenly blessings bestowed upon the saints. This long doxology (Ephesians 1:3-14) has no equivalent in all the Books of the New Testament. Its meanings are rich and related.

The Doxology is composed of three Sections:

1. God who blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heaven is glorified, “to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted to the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:6).
2. The Son who bestowed upon us salvation is glorified, “that we who first turned in Christ should be to the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:12).
3. The Holy Spirit is glorified, “who (the Holy Spirit) is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:14).

Content and Outline:

The Epistle contains four major themes:

1. Salvation through grace (Ephesians 2:4-10), “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised [us] up together, and made [us] sit together in the heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in [His] kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; [it is] the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

2. The Gentiles share in the blessings of salvation (Ephesians 2:11-13), “Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh -- who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands -- that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”
3. Household mutual duties (between women, men, and children, and between masters and slaves) (Ephesians 2: 22 to 6:18):
 - Wives: “Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:22).
 - Husbands: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for her (Ephesians 5:25).
 - Children: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise; that it might be well with you and you may live long on the earth” (Ephesians 6:1-3).
 - Fathers: “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).
 - Bond servants: “Bond servants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ” (Ephesians 6:5).
 - Masters: “And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him” (Ephesians 6:9)
4. Warring with the devil, “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11-18).

The Epistle to the Philippians

The epistle of our teacher St Paul to the Philippians

Philippi:

A city in the region of Macedonia, its old name was (Krinides or Crenides) meaning “small fountains”. About 10 miles to the south east, was port Neapolis and the two cities were connected by a famous road known as the Via Egnatia. As for the river at which the Jews prayed, and at which also St Paul prayed (Acts 16:13), was most likely the river of Jinjits known today as the Anjista.

The city of Philippi was inside the borders of old Thasian which Philip, king of Macedon annexed to his kingdom in the year 356 B.C. He expanded the city and named it after himself. In the year 168 BC, the Romans conquered the city.

In 43 B.C. a decisive battle, the Battle of Philippi, was fought near the city between Marcus Junius Brutus and Cassius²⁹, on one side, and Mark Antony and Octavian Caesar’s heirs on the other. Octavian prevailed in this battle and became the next Roman Caesar by the name Augustus Caesar. Due to his victory, Octavian took care of the city and sent her Roman settlers, so that it became a colony enjoying the rights and privileges of the Romans.

In the book of Acts, St Luke the author, mentioned the city in verse 19:21 “*and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony ...*” It is the “foremost” according to importance or because it is the first city a traveler reaches by sea.

St Paul’s visits to Philippi and the institution of its church:

1. The church of Philippi was established on the hands of St Paul the apostle during his second trip to the city around the year 52 AD.

It was the first church to be founded in Europe (Acts 16:12). In this trip, St Paul was accompanied by Silas and Timothy and they stayed in the city for several days. It is evident from Acts 16:13 that Philippi had no synagogues for St Paul met the Jews of the city at the place where they used to meet and pray; “*And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.*”

- The first to accept the faith in this city was a woman by the name of Lydia a purple dye merchant from Thyatira “*The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us*” Acts(16:15).
- The book of Acts narrates the events, which took place in Philippi during the apostle’s visits:

²⁹ Assassins of Julius Caesar

A slave girl woman possessed with a spirit of divination met them. She used to bring her masters much profit by fortune-telling, *“This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, “These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation. And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And he came out that very hour.”* (Acts 16:17-18).

Certainly, this evil spirit was not sincere about his goals. For his witness of the apostle and his service carried in it his deception:

- i. Pushes people to have faith in this evil spirit, and thus they become under his rule.
- ii. Satan’s witness to the apostle carries in it the danger of faith through believing the witness of Satan and accepting it. Accordingly, St Paul rejected Satan’s witness as Christ rejected it. Therefore, we should not accept Satan’s witness, nor seek him, and we should reject everything he utters even if it is true, for he does so for the sake of our deception and misleading through the truth (the truth that begets falsehood)

As a result of the divination spirit’s parting from the slave girl, her masters were resentful of St. Paul for they were divested of their profits. So, they seized the apostle and Silas and dragged them to the marketplace to the magistrates claiming that the two were troubling the city and were calling of customs that do not agree with those of the Romans. They were jailed and their feet were fastened to the stocks. After that, a great earthquake opened the doors of the prison and the jailer believed in Christ and was baptized along with his family (Acts 16).

2. St. Paul visited this church a second time during his third missionary trip in the year 57 AD as he went to Macedonia from Ephesus (Acts 20:1). St Paul refers to this in his second epistle to the Corinthians *“Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia.”* (2 Co 12:13). Also *“For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears.”* (2 Co 7:5)
3. The third visit was in the year 58 AD during his return from his third missionary trip. From Corinth, he passed through Philippi and Troas to reach Jerusalem. (Acts 20:6) (Acts 20:3 – 21:15)
4. The fourth visit was probably in 63 AD after his release from the prison in Rome for in his letter he tells the Philippians: *“I trust the Lord that I myself shall come shortly”* (Philippi 2:24). This shows his joy to reach Philippi after his first imprisonment in Rome. All of this explain and reveal the strong attachment that was there between St Paul and the Philippians.

It is possible to summarize St. Paul’s trips to the church in Philippi as follows:

1. During his second missionary trip, St Paul went to Philippi in 52 AD (Acts 16)
2. During his third missionary trip in 57, he went there through Ephesus (Acts 20:1)

3. Returning from his third missionary trip in 58, from Corinth he passed through Philippi and Troas on his way to Jerusalem. (Acts 20:1)
4. After his release from the first imprisonment in Rome, he went to Philippi in the year 63 AD (Phil 2:24)
5. In the year 67 as he wrote his first epistle to Timothy from Macedonia (1 Tim 1:3)

The church of Philippi faced terrible persecution:

St Paul mentions this in (2 Co 8:1,2) saying: *“Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.”*

It is evident from this verse that though the church in Philippi was poor, she abundantly shared in the needs of the church in Jerusalem. In addition, she shared in the monetary needs of St Paul. For he says: *“Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.”* (Philippi 4:15-18)

Date and place of Writing:

Our teacher St Paul wrote this letter from Rome during his first imprisonment. This is very clear from the following references mentioned in the epistle:

- (1:7) *“... because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains ...”*
- (1:13) *“...my chains are in Christ ...”*
- (1:14) *“... and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”*
- (1:16) *“The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains”*

It is probable that St Paul was guarded by the Emperor’s guards in Caesar’s house:

(1:13) *“so that [my chains] have become evident to the whole palace guard ...”*

He sends the Philippians the greetings of those in Caesar’s house:

(4:22) *“All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.”*

It is likely that the epistle was written in 63A.D. or near the end of his imprisonment and following is the evidence:

1. St Paul remained in the place where the epistle was written for a period of time that is by no means little; for in verse 1:12 he says: *“But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel”*
2. He was hoping to be freed soon: *“Therefore I hope to send him[Timothy] at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.”*(2:23-24)
3. The mentioned relationship, between Rome and Philippi, took a long time to establish
 - a. When the Philippians heard of Paul’s imprisonment, they sent him a gift through Epaphroditus (2:25), (4:18) who became sick. When they heard of it, they were greatly concerned and Epaphroditus knew of their concern (2:26, 27).
 - b. After his recovery, Epaphroditus was sent to Philippi to put their concern at ease (2:28) *“Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful.”*

Reason of Writing the Epistle:

It is a letter from a shepherd to his flock but was different than most of his other letters. The reason for the epistle was not a predicament in the church of Philippi, for it is full of spiritual advice and guidance, which pertain to the Christian life. In addition, it sheds light on the state of the apostle in Rome.

It is also possible that the principal reason for writing the epistle was what faced Epaphroditus in Rome from sickness. For he was the one who carried the gifts of the Philippians to St Paul during his imprisonment in Rome. So, when the apostle saw how concerned they were about Epaphroditus, he sent him to them and gave him this letter expressing his gratitude and offering them advice on the matters he knew through Epaphroditus (2:25-30).

The Philippians were always sharing in St Paul’s needs (Philippi 4:15-16), (2 Corinthians 11:9). However, it had been a while since they were able to continue their care (Philippi 4:10), and now they were back to offer and share in almsgiving.

In general the reasons for writing the epistle can be summarized as follows:

1. To express the apostle’s love, his eagerness to see them and praising their faith. (Philippi 1:7-8)
2. To express the apostle’s gratitude to their generosity which is a sign of their increasing faith.
3. To war them against the dangers facing them (1:27-28), (3:2)
4. Advising them to unite, to stand firm and to imitate Christ, to submit everything to Him and to complete the salvation in fear and trembling (1:27-28), (2:12-17). So that they fulfill his joy (2:2) and rejoice with him (2:17-18).

The most important advice the apostle offered the Philippians:

- Taking heed and looking out for those holding to the Mosaic Law and who boast being of the stock of the Israelites (3:2-9).
- Continuing growth in the spiritual life *“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”* (2:12-14)
- Following the apostle’s example (3:17) and not pondering on earthly matters (3:19-20)
- Instilling the feelings of joy in the church in spite of the hardships the believers were suffering, and those he was suffering in prison; the apostle says: *“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”* (4:4)

The Topic of the Epistle is Rejoicing in Christ
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This is the epistle of joyfulness in Christ Jesus.

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Word</u>	<u>Verse</u>	<u>Repeated</u>
1	Joy	4	1
1	Rejoice	18	2
1	Good	6	1
1	Good will	15	1
2	Joy	2	1
2	Rejoice	16	1
2	Rejoice	17	1
2	Rejoice	18	1
2	Rejoice	28	1
2	Glad	17	1
2	Glad	18	1
2	Gladness	29	1
2	Good	13	1
2	Pleasure	13	1
3	Rejoice	1	1
3	Rejoice	3	1
4	Rejoice	4	2
4	Rejoice	10	1
4	Joy	1	1
4	Good	8	1
Total		16 (verse)	22 (words)

The word joy and its synonyms were accompanied by hardships. This was the case with the apostle and his companion Silas when they were imprisoned in Philippi. They were praising God in the middle of the night after being flogged and their blood was pouring.

He was also happy when he was shackled by chains in Rome, for his restraints expanded the circle of preaching the gospel. As such, He induced the believers in Philippi to be joyful for they were granted to partake of Christ's sufferings (1:29).

He was happy for their salvation and he considered them his crown and joy (1:4). *"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ"* (1:3-6)

He was happy for their service as they helped his financial needs; *"But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."* (4:10-19)

And above all, he was rejoicing in the Lord Jesus: *"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!"* (4:4)

The third chapter holds the heart of the epistle; the apostle considered everything a loss to the knowledge of Christ *"I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ"*. He indeed lost everything for His sake *"that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death"* (3:10)

Characteristics of the Epistle to Philippi:

- In this epistle, St Paul points out personal matters that makes it similar to the 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians... For there are no dogmatic issues in the epistle, and the few dogmas mentioned are for practical application. This applies to what is stated in the epistle: *"who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made*

Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (2:6-11)

- On the earlier existence of Jesus Christ (2:6-11):

The epistle is not argumentative in nature, for there are no direct arguments mentioned except just a few (3:18,19). Also, the epistle is void of any rebuke or reprove, but on the contrary, it was written with the spirit of gratitude and honor to the Philippians. This is so, because the apostle found little in the church of Philippi that deserved reproach, but found many things, which deserved praise.

- The epistle title:

It is different than the rest of the other epistles, for the apostle did not only address “*To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi*”, but added “*with the bishops and deacons*”.

The ending of the epistle has a unique character in that it includes both general greetings, as well as, greetings to the house of Caesar.

- Style:

Similar to the rest of the letters in that it is not continuous but changeable and quickly moves from one topic to another, and includes numerous instructions and affable warnings

In depth he discusses his spiritual condition, his personal feelings, the state of Christianity and the evil world.

In addition, St Paul uses some expressions repeatedly like “my beloved (agaphtoi), “my brothers” (adalfoi) especially in the fourth chapter in which he says: “*Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.*” (4:1)

Contents:

In addition to the introduction and the ending, the epistle includes five essential points as follows:

Introduction (1:1-11)

- Section 1: Discussion of the benefits of imprisonment to the preaching of the gospel (1:22-26) as he refers to:
 - a. Furtherance of the gospel in spite of the apostle's imprisonment (1:12-18)
 - b. The apostle's personal feelings towards those whom he sent the epistle (1:19-26)
- Section 2: Practical advices (1:27-2:18) and include the following:
 - a. Believers' duties towards each other (1:27-2:4)
 - b. Presenting Christ as an example of humility (2:5-11)
 - c. Encouraging to hold fast the word of life and to stand firm on faith
- Section 3: Discussion on sending Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30) and the character of each:
 - a. Timothy (2:19-24)
 - b. Epaphroditus (2:25-29)
- Section 4: Warnings against those deviation from the correct faith and the call to spiritual perfection (3:1-21). These refer to:
 - a. fallacy of the Jewish thinking (3:1-11)
 - b. The necessity of continuing the struggle till spiritual perfection is attained (3:12-17).
 - c. Comparison between the materialistic Christians and the Christians who strive to life of aptness (3:18-21).
- Section 5: Various advices and thanksgiving (4:1-20) and include:
 - a. Advices on unity, joy and perfect peace (4:1-7)
 - b. Summarizing Christian perfection in short phrases (4:8-9)
 - c. Thanksgiving for the gifts sent to him (4:10-20)

Ending (4:21-23)

Canonicity of the Epistle:

- **Writer:**

There is a clear indication in the epistle that St Paul is its writer (1:1) and that Timothy was one of his companions during its writing (1:1), (2:19). This shows, as we shall see in detail, that he was imprisoned at the time of its writing (7:1) and that he preached the gospel in Macedonia at an earlier time (4:15).

All of this agrees with what happened and prevents any doubt about St Paul being the writer – the teachings and the style entirely agrees with what this apostle used to write in the rest of his epistles.

External Evidence:

- This epistle was included in Mercian's canons.
- In his "Refutation Against All Heresies, Hippolytus referred to this epistle.
- In his letter to the Philippians, St Polycarp plainly mentioned this epistle to be St Paul's (3:2).
- This epistle was mentioned in the Mouratorian fragment, in the Vulgate and in the Peshitu ??
- Erenaos used this epistle (4:18) and Clement of Alexandria (pai dar as, 52, Etrwmat d13)
- So did Tertullian (de resur, cont. Marc, v.20)

Internal Evidence and criticism:

Baur was the first to criticize the canonicity of the epistle and others from his school (The Tubigen School) like Schugler, Volkman, Bruno Baur (1790 -1860). After those came Hitzig, Kneuker, Hinrich, Hockstra, Biedermann and especially Halsten who also criticized the epistle.

However, all of their objections were a result of misunderstanding to some of the verses in the epistle.

Following are some of these objections and the answer to each:

- Baur claimed that the epistle bears Gnostic teachings, but this is far from being true. For to have similarities does not mean agreement.
- Critics claim that the mention of bishops and deacons is a proof, in their view, that the epistle was written after the time of St Paul when the Church has established these orders. This objection, however, is a very weak one, for St Paul and other apostles (i.e. St Peter), in many of their letters, talk about bishops, deacons and other clergy ranks.
- Critics believe that the epistle was only meant as a reconciliatory medium between two opposite factions, which appeared in the Church during the 2nd century and to which St Paul referred in the 4th chapter when he says: "*I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.*" (4:2). However, this verse in no way is an indication that there were two opposing factions in the Church. Besides, it was proven that the epistle was written in the sixties of the first century and not the second century as these critics claim.
- The critics think that the epistle to the Philippians is the result of combining two different letters of St Paul since he says in the middle of the epistle³⁰ "*Finally my brethren, rejoice in the Lord*" (3:1). However, whatever is in the epistle that is not organized successively means that the apostle was usually not bound by the sequential writing style in most of his letters for he moves from one topic to another and from one idea to another with no order. And this does not need complicated assumptions like the one above.

³⁰ Beginning of chapter 3

- The most important objection on the canonicity of the epistle and its authority is the one, which Holsten came up with regarding the differences between the epistle to Philippi and the other epistles especially the ones that discuss the teachings on Christ, salvation, and justification. Following are our response:
 - He claimed that the idea of Christ’s existence before time in the epistle does not agree with what is mentioned in the first epistle to the Corinthians. He came to this conclusion by comparing the following verses:
 - (Philippi 2:6-11) [*“ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*]
 - (1 Cor 15:45-49) [*“And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man..”*]

From what is mentioned in the epistle to the Philippi he concluded, according to his own view, that the humanity of Christ began at incarnation. On the other hand according to the verses from the epistle to the Corinthians, he says that Christ’s existence before time was a heavenly man.

The response to this objection is very simple:

In his first epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul does not talk about Christ before time, but talks about Him as He will appear in His second coming in the glorified body.

- Holsten believes that there is a contradiction between (Philippians 3:6) where he says: *“concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”* and what he mentioned in Romans (7:21) *“I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.”*

Response

What the writer says in the epistle to Philippi (3:6) can be compared with what St Paul said in his epistle to the Galatians (1:14) “*And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.*” In both places he talks about the Law as an external thing with respect to Jew who considers the Law as an only external thing. Thus, from this angle he can see himself “blameless”. However, it is different when the Law is looked at through its deep spiritual meaning.

- Holsten thinks that the writer of the epistle to Philippi is indifferent with regards to missionary work and its subject, and that St. Paul rejoices with any preaching in the name of Christ. In his opinion, this conflicts with the writer’s approach in the epistle to the Corinthians and the one to the Galatians.

In the epistle to Philippi (1:15-18)

“Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.”

In his 2nd epistle to the Corinthians (15:1-4), St Paul says:

“Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly--and indeed you do bear with me. For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted--you may well put up with it!”*

In his epistle to the Galatians (1:8-9), St Paul says:

“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.”

Response:

The persons to whom St Paul refers in Philippi are not preaching a different gospel than that of the apostle. They preached Christ with the wrong intentions and, therefore, are not similar to the enemies the apostle refers to in 2nd Corinthians or Galatians. It is possible that those enemies are referred to in Philippi when the apostles says: “*Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation³¹!*” (3:2).

³¹ Mutilation is circumcision or those who hold of the external appearance of the Law and leave its essence.

On the time and the place the epistle was written:

In our earlier discussion on the place and time regarding the writing of the epistle, we proved that St Paul wrote it in Rome during his first imprisonment there around 63 A.D. But, there is another weak view that says otherwise:

Regarding the place of writing:

Some claim that the epistle was written from Caesarea, during St Paul's imprisonment there, and not in Rome. However, the epistle has many indications referring to St Paul's circumstances in Rome and especially his reference to the palace guard and all the rest (1:13). There is no doubt that here he refers to Rome and to the other places there. In addition, his reference to many of his friends and his hope in his quick release, confirms that the epistle was written in Rome and not in Caesarea.

Regarding the time of writing:

Some claim that the epistle to Philippi was written before the epistles to (Ephesus, Colossians and Philemon) and not after and support their claim as follows:

- They see a similarity between the epistle to Philippi and the one to the Romans and this, in their view, include the suggestion that the epistle to Philippi was written directly after the epistle to the Romans.
- In addition, they claim that the epistle to Philippi contains the last touches of St Paul's speech concerning the dangers of the Jews. On the contrary the epistle to Ephesus and the epistle to Colossy refer to Gnosticism. Accordingly, they see that these epistles refer to a late phase of the Christian thought and hence to a period after the one in which the epistle to Philippi was written.

Response:

Most of the proves and evidences do not lead to this view – for St Paul generally in his writings does not take into account the historical period in which he was writing and does not offer his letters according to the historical order of thoughts. Rather, his letter were particularly determined by special needs related to the church or the person to whom it was written. Furthermore, this period that St Paul spent in Rome was most likely not enough for St Paul's thoughts to have changed.

The Epistle to the Colossians

The epistle of our teacher St Paul to the Colossians

Colossae or Colosse³²

An ancient city of Phrygia in Asia minor, on the Lycus (river of Phrygia), which is a tributary of the Maeander River . It was situated about 12 miles South East of Laodicea (on the lycos), and near the great road from Ephesus to the Euphrates and was also near the City of Hierapolis.

Colosse was situated on the trade route that extended from the West to the East and was therefore of a great importance. But the route moved from there, which led to Colosse's diminishing importance and the rising of Laodicea and Hierapolis to take its place (Co 2:1, 4:13). It was famous for its soft wool and its independent status under the Roman rule.

Institution of the Church in Colosse:

- Definitely St Paul did not establish the Colossian Church by himself, as he says in his epistle: "For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh" (Colossians 2:1).
- In Acts we read that St Paul passed twice through Phrygia ; the first at the start of his second missionary trip and the second at the start of his third trip (Acts 16:6, 18:23, 19:10). It is doubtful that he visited Colosse during either trip.

³² Colossae



The site of Colossae is located on the southern edge of the Lycus Valley near larger and more significant sites such as Laodicea, 8 mi. [13 km.] to the west, and Hierapolis, 7.8 mi. [21.5 km.] to the northwest. It is approximately 112 mi. [180 km.] due east of Ephesus.

Paul wrote two letters to Colossae, namely Colossians and Philemon. Paul evidently never visited the city (Col 1:9; 2:1), but rather his colleague Epaphras brought the gospel message to the three cities of the Lycus Valley, that is to Colossae, to Laodicea, and to Hierapolis. However, Paul hoped to visit the city, for he requested Philemon to prepare a lodging for him in anticipation of a visit (Phil 1:23)

The mound (Turkish: *huyuk*) of Colossae has not been excavated. It was said to have been a large city in the fifth century B.C. but for some reason it seems to have lost some of its importance by the first century A.D. and nowadays it lies in ruins except for a small village by the name Khouny about three miles south of where it used to be.

- It is possible that through St Paul's long stay at Ephesus, and his missionary work there for two years "so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10), indirectly caused the establishment of churches in the valley of Lecosse.
- The greetings in (Colossians 4:10-17) make clear that St Paul did not serve in Colosse, but his friends did. Besides, he knew some of the Colossians very well like Philemon who lived in Colosse and believed because of St Paul (Phil 19) possibly in Ephesus.
- It is more than likely that the founding of the church in Colosse was entrusted to Epaphras and after him Archippus "As you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit." (1:7-8). Also, "And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." (4:17) and "...To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house" (Philemon 1:2). This Philemon was a serving member in the church of Colosse, and so was Onesimus "Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here" (4:7-8).
- It is clear that some of the believers in Colosse were Jews and the others were Gentiles. For St Paul addresses the Gentiles saying: "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled .. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." (1:21, 27). And to the Jews, he says: "In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ .. So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths" (2:11, 16).
- Antichus Epiphanies moved 2000 Jewish captives from Babylon to Phrygia. This number increased to 11,000 in the territory, which Laodicea was its capital at the time of writing the epistle.

Place and Time of the Epistle Writing:

This epistle was written in Rome in the period (61-63AD) during St Paul's first imprisonment there, during which he also wrote the epistle to Ephesus and sent then both from by Tychicus (Colossians 4:7-8, Ephesians 6:21-22). In other words, the epistle to the Colossians was sent by Tychicus (4:7-8), who also carried the epistle to Ephesus (Ephesians 6:21).

Onesimus accompanied Tychicus and carried the epistle to Philemon, who at the time, resided in Colosse and was his slave and fled away. He believed on the hands of St Paul in Rome and now was returning back to his former master carrying the apostle's letter. Archippus is also

mentioned in the epistle (Colossian 4:17) and in (Philemon 1:2). It is probable that he was Philemon's son.

Reason for the Epistle Writing:

When Epaphras reached Rome after his trip to Colosse, he reported to St Paul the status of the church there (1:8). This report moved St Paul to write the Colossians his letter. For they faced foreign teachings, which are debated as to their type. Some say that the teachings were Eastern Jewish mixed with Sophism, and others say they were Gnostic or Abounic Gnosticism and there are those who say they were Essenic teachings.

But we could infer from the epistle itself that a group was absorbed by Judaism and, therefore, the apostle warned them from holding fast to teachings and traditions that are according to men, lifting their thoughts from clinging to the circumcision of the flesh and earthly obligations: "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God. Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations-- "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," which all concern things which perish with the using--according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh." (Colossians 2:8-end).

Interestingly, this group did not stop at its Jewish beliefs, but went outside to its neighbors' beliefs as well. The extent of these mixed beliefs led the group members to believe in a dual world (dualism); good and evil, body and spirit, light and dark, ... etc., which led them to chastise the body which was not required under the Law. This is apparent from the apostle's saying: "These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh." (2:23) In addition, they believed that it was necessary to abstain from meat to scold the body, which in their eyes, was the root of evil and the source of sin.

Their ultimate goal, from neglecting their bodies and conduct a chaste life, was to be like the angels: “Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind” (2:18)

Furthermore, their feeling of the magnitude of their sins as corporeal prevented them from approaching God directly. Additionally, they believed in the Jewish dogma that says the Law had been handed down to the people through the angels (Acts 7:38,53 Galatians 3:19, Hebrews 2:2) and what was attributed to the spirits with regard to their affect in the pagan world. All of this led these Colossians to worship the angels as mediators between man and God.

What was more problematic was their misunderstanding of the person of Christ who (to them) was just a spirit among the great spirits that won their admiration. Thus, it is possible to say that the heresies of the Colossians were a mix of Judaism, Christianity and pagan beliefs. This complex mix was unique in that it was different than any other belief that appeared during the Apostolic era. So, in the face of these beliefs and heresies that spoiled the Church in Colosse and which Epahras reported to the apostle, it was necessary for St Paul to write them a letter to correct their thoughts and keep the Church from dangerous beliefs, to explain the person of Christ and His perfect salvation, and to encourage them to unite with their Lord in all aspects of life and its requirements³³.

Characteristics of the Epistle (Similarities with the Ephesians):

Comparison between Colossians and the other epistles of St Paul, it is clear that the similarities between it and the one to the Ephesians are very close to the extent that the two sound the same and consequently not strange for some to think that one of the two is a copy of the other. It is very rare not to find a verse in Colossians that does not have a similar verse in Ephesians and, therefore, pointing out the characteristics of Colossians is very easy when it is compared with the Ephesians.

- **Structure:**

It is acceptable to say that this epistle is different than the one to Ephesus with respect to the former argumentative tone. Though, we do not find in this epistle the same sharp arguments found in the epistle the Ephesians or the one to the Corinthians, but its argumentative nature is somewhat evident.

- **Topic:**

This epistle is nearly the same as the one to the Ephesians, but we cannot say that the two epistles contain the same teachings. For the teachings in Ephesians are theological in nature, and those in Colossians are centered on the person of Christ as the head of everything and through Him the meaning of existence is defined. For example, St. Paul

- **Style and Language:**

³³ It seems that those Jews in Colosse did not hold fast to circumcision as a necessary sign to salvation and were not absorbed by Judaism. This is clear when we compare the same discussion found in the epistle to the Galatians as it does not have the same sharp tone found Galatians.

- Both, this epistle, and the one to the Ephesians are very similar. Seventy eight verses of this epistle has similar expressions in Ephesians, or more than half of the epistle. Also, both epistles have difficult verses to understand.
- The epistle contains words mention for the first time in all of the epistle of St Paul. There are 34 words mentioned in Colosse and were not mentioned his other writing and 18 of these words are in the second chapter. Only twelve words, of these 34 words mentioned in the other books of the New Testament.
- One of the authoritative references in bible study “Morshed Al Talebeen” points to the characteristic of this epistle and the one to the Ephesians as follows:
 - “This epistle agrees to the one to the Ephesians with respect to the date and the place of their writing.

And both were sent from Rome, by Tychicus, where St Paul was in prison the first time. Compare (Colossians 4:7-8) and (Ephesians 7:21,22).

- Also, both of the epistles agree in their underlying message. For, it seems that during their wring, St Paul’s mind was full of contemplations on the glory and the majesty of the person of Christ as he lengthened, in both epistles, his writing explaining this subject along with great mystery of the Divine grace that was kept in secret from old – God’s intention to gather all that is in heaven and on earth into one holy family under the head that is Christ. Thereby, abolishing the wall between the Jews and the gentiles, so that in God’s kingdom, there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. (3:11). In both epistles, we find this magnificent teaching where he offers practical advice to the believers from different ranks and varying cases.
- But in spite of this great similarity, the two epistles do differ:
 - The epistle to the Ephesians is a contemplative epistle; there were no special faults for the apostle to address. On the other hand, the epistle to the Colossians has an argumentative style, for they were misled by those who were teaching Jewish rituals, opposing the fullness that is in Christ Jesus. In this regard, this epistle contain what is in the epistle to the Galatians³⁴.
- Main Topic “Christ our head”:
While the epistle to the Ephesians explain the position of the Church as the body, the epistle to the Colossians explain that Christ is the Head:
 - “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation” (1:15)
 - “all his fullness” (1:19, 2:9)
 - “all things were created by him and for him.” (1:16)
 - “He is before all things” (1:17)

³⁴ Galatians differ than Colossians in their topic. The essential topic in Galatians is justification by faith in Christ rather than works of the Law. And in Colossians, the topic is to be full of grace through Christ rather than the weak Jewish rituals.

- “and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.” (1:20, 2:14)
- “[He] is the head of all principality and power” (2:10, 15)
- Head of the body; the Church (1:18,24, 2:9, 3:4)
- He is all and in all (3:11)

The honor of the Church is tied to Christ, for she is united with Him and perfect in Him as she died, buried and resurrected. Accordingly, let us take off the old man and put on the new one (1:27,2:10, 3:1-10)

Epistle Contents:

1. Introduction (1:1-2)
2. Instruction (1:3, 2:1-23). This section talks about the Lord Christ and His salvational work, along with revealing the false teachings that the false teachers raised (1:2 – 2:23). This includes:
 - a. St Paul’s thanksgivings and prayers for the Colossians (1:3-14)
 - b. Discussion of the person of Christ (1:15-20)
 - c. Fulfilling of God’s purpose to the Colossians’ salvation (1:21-29)
 - d. Resisting the false teachers (2:1-23)
3. Moral and practical advice (3:1-4:1)
 - a. Advice offered to all Christians. In them, he points to the new life that believers must follow (3:1-4), and which lead to practical results (3:5-17)
 - b. Advice regarding the family; relationship between the husband and wife (3:18,19) and between them and their children (3:20,21). Also, the relation between the slaves and their master(s) (3:22-4:1).
 - c. General advice (4:2-6) and the end (4:2-18)

Importance of the Epistle:

The epistle is of great importance with respect to the Christian theology. In addition to its discussion of the teaching on salvation as mentioned in the other epistles, it explains the excellence of the person of Christ over anyone and points out without a doubt the sufficiency His redemptive work.

Canonicity of the Epistle³⁵ :

- External Evidence:
 - Barnabas’ epistle³⁶
 - Ignatius’ letter to Ephesus (10:3)
 - Policarp’s letter to Philippi (10:1)³⁷
 - Adversus Haereses by Irinaeus (3:14)

³⁵ There is no clear usage of the epistle by Clement of Rome or in the Shepherd by Hermas.

³⁶ Compare (12:7) with (Colossians 1:16).

³⁷ Refers to verse (Colossians 1:23) that faith should be their foundation. Also compare Policarp (11:2) and (Colossians 1:23, 3:5).

- The Stromata (1:1) by Clement of Alexandria
- Among those who accepted the epistle as written by St Paul are Tertullian and Origen
- The Muratorian Fragment
- Internal Evidence:
 - St. Paul clearly points to himself in the introduction as usual.
 - The thoughts are with no doubt St Paul's and agree wholly with those in his epistle to the Ephesians.
 - The persons mention in the ending (4:7-17) are all ⁷³⁸ known to be his companions and coworkers.

Objections and the Response:

The epistle has faced lot of criticism that was started by Meierhoff in 1838. He rejected the epistle on grounds that its words and its style are not those of St Paul and the thoughts discussed do not belong to the apostle. Accordingly, the epistle is similar to the Ephesians and contains, in his opinion, the heresy of Corinth. In the same way, Bauer's school reject the canonicity of the epistle.

Main three Objections:

First

The style of the epistle is not that of St Paul, for it contains 34 words that were not mentioned in any of other St Paul's epistles. Also, many of the expressions that St Paul uses in the other epistles were not used here in this epistle like (δικαιοσυνη, σωτηρια, αποκαλυψις) and these words are considered to be St Paul's favorite. In addition, most of the letters that were used often in his other epistles were not mentioned in this epistle except rarely (αρα, διοτι, γαρ).

Response

1. Weak argument for it does not only apply to this epistle, but also could be applied to the epistle to the Romans. This is so, because Romans includes words that its only.
2. Most of the words raised in the objection are in the second chapter because it discusses unique material.
3. The difference between this epistle and the other epistles, of St Paul, and the topics it discusses are enough reasons as to why this epistle contains unique words and it would be a mistake to say or conclude otherwise. Furthermore, any writer who writes about new topics uses, he never wrote about before, uses new words suitable for these new topics. Also, a writer's style changes over time, especially if he faces different conditions than the ones he experienced before.

Second

The epistle has Gnostic marks that were present in the third century and therefore used the following words:

³⁸ Except Jesus (Justus) and Nymphas.

- πληρωμα (1:9)
- αιωνες (1:26)
- μυστηριον (1:29,27,2:2)
- σοφιας (2:3)

Also, they think that the mention of angels in (1:16) and the thought of Christ (1:15) are Gnostic prints of Valentines.

Response

- There is no reason as to the assumption of a Gnostic effect from the third century. It is true that the Gnostics did not find the epistle contradicting their thoughts or their beliefs as Valentines and Marcion used the epistle. However, the epistle is missing the most important Gnostic belief, which says that the world was created through a creator who was unfamiliar with the greater God, or that he was against Him.
- The false thoughts that St Paul pointed out were a mix of different beliefs and are to bond into one belief system.
- Most modern scholars deny this objection and reject the saying that St Paul discussed false Gnostic teachings.

Third

The teachings, in this epistle, concerning the person of Christ are not St Paul's. And some scholars, like Davidson, say that there is a Gnostic element in these teachings and are close to St John's thought on the Logos. Meaning that Christ, in the epistle, is offered as an icon of God the invisible, the center of existence, existing before all things seen and unseen (1:16-18), the source, goal of all the creation, the perfect mediator reconciling, not only the sinners but, everyone on earth and in heaven to God.

Response

There is no contradiction between St Paul's thought in this epistle and his other epistles. And the picture he offers for Christ does not disagree with what he offers in the other epistles. For example, we find numerous references to the thought , in question, in:

- Romans 8:19-22
- 1 Corinthians 8:6
- 2 Corinthians 4:4
- Philippians 2:5-11

The Epistles to the Thessalonians

The two epistle of our teacher St Paul to the Thessalonians

Thessaloniki:

Was the capital of one of the Macedonians colonies and today it is called Salonik and is located on the gulf of Salonika. It was called Therma (the warm stream) and it was the home of Alexander the first son of Anitater and he named it Thessalonica after his wife Thessalonic sister of Alexander the Great.

The city was the second after Constantinople in terms of trade and was freed in the year 43 B.C. Its rulers were called (Politernamus) or “City Rulers” (Acts 17:6) and it had lot of Jews who were mostly traders and they had quarter(s) and synagogue for themselves.

St Paul’s Visits:

St Paul visited Thessalonica for the first time during his second missionary trip, accompanying him Silas and Timothy, as he was leaving Philippi. This was around the year 52 AD.

The book of Acts points to this visit and to St Paul’s establishing a Church there as follows:

“Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.” And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas. But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king--Jesus.” And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.” Acts (17:1-10)

It is evident from the above that St Paul went first to the Jews whom he preached for three Sabbaths from the Scriptures, but it seems that he was not that successful among the Jews for very few received the faith. So, most of the church’s members were pagans and devout Greeks (i.e. those Greeks who became Jews and were different than those who were Jews by birth). Refer to Acts 6:1, 11:20, 13:43, 13:50, 16:14, 17:18, 18:7). And among those who believed were leading women or were from the higher classes.

St Paul did not remain in Thessalonica a long time after the Jews stirred up their persecution against him and the book of Acts does not indicate at how long he stayed there. However, it can be concluded from “*For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.*” (Philippi 4:16) that the apostle stayed a long time in the city and because of the attacks he faced, on the hands of the Jews, he left for Pirie as mentioned.

St Paul refers to the persecution he and the Church faced in his first epistle to Thessalonica as follows:

(1 Thess. 1:6) “*And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit,*”

(1 Thess 2:14) “*For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans,*”

(1 Thess 3:3) “*that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.*”

It seems that this was the only trip St Paul made to Thessalonica in which he founded the Church there.

- For after St Paul aimed for Pirie sent by the brothers, he tried to return again to Thessalonica to keep his fight there. But he was prevented “*Therefore we wanted to come to you--even I, Paul, time and again--but Satan hindered us.*” (1 Thess 2:18)
- St Paul, therefore, decided to send Timothy in his place. who was with him in Athens, to confirm the believers and to strengthen them on bearing the troubles “*Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith*” (1 Thess 3:1-2)
- After Thessalonica, St Paul went to Corinth where he met Timothy (Acts 18:5) who was carrying good news “*But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you*” (1 Thess 3:6). These good news were the motivation for writing the first epistle.

Time and Place of the Epistle Writing:

The first epistle to the Thessalonians is considered to be the first epistle St Paul wrote. He wrote it out of Corinth, and was accompanied by Silas and Timothy, around the latter part of the year 52 AD during his second missionary trip.

Reason for Writing the Epistle:

- To express his joy towards them and to encourage them to stand fast on their faith and to ask them to act and behave as they have received from him.

- To tell them to abstain from evil manners and the lusts of the gentiles who do not know God (1 Thess 4:1-8)
- To advise them regarding the brotherly love towards one another, behaving diligently among those inside and outside and working with their hands so that they would have no need to anyone (1 Thess 4:9-12).
- To be submissive under those admonishing them spiritually (1 Thess 5:12).

In the 4th chapter of this epistle, St Paul describes Resurrection in great detail:

He stresses that those who are reposed are not perished, but rather they went before others, and will rise at the last day. He commands them not to mourn over the reposed as the gentiles do who have no hope. For as Christ died and rose, so are all the believers, yet some will be alive at His second coming. Those will be transformed (transforming is one type of death, for all should die once and then rise) but they will not rise before those who were already dead. For the ones who are already dead in Christ will rise first; meaning before the transformation of those who will be still alive. And in the great Judgment Day, the Lord will descend with His Holy hosts with shouting and a great voice followed by the sound of the trumpet alerting the reposed and calling them to meet the Lord, and so they get out of their tombs and the living get transformed and all are raptured to meet the Lord on the clouds.

Second Epistle to the Thessalonians

Time and Place of the Epistle Writing:

The 2nd epistle to the Thessalonians, as the first, was written in Corinth, for at the time of its writing, St Paul was still with Silas and Timothy (1 Thess 1:1) and (2 Thess 1:1) and was written after the first epistle by few month in the year 53 AD. Also, from Acts (18:5) and the 2 Corinthians (2 Co 1:19), it seems that Silas and Timothy went to St Paul when he was in Corinth.

Reason for Writing the Epistle:

- Answering the questions of the Thessalonians which they stirred up after they received the first epistle *“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.”*
- Addressing some of the phrases mentioned in the first epistle, which were vague and was afraid of their wrong interpretation.
- Warning the Thessalonians church of the fake epistle bearing the apostle’s name.
- Explaining the circumstances that must take place before the Lord’s second coming, for the Thessalonians thought, from the first epistle that the Day was very near. He explained that the Lord shall come:
 - After the great falling

- The mystery of lawlessness is revealed, so that He comes to destroy the lawlessness “whose coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception.” (2 Thess 9,10)
- Commanding them to stand firm in faith and love and to avoid all who behave “disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.” (2 Thess 3:6)

Christ in the Two Epistles

The main topic of the two epistles: The second coming of Christ is our hope.

The second coming of Christ is the hope of the Church and the main topic in both of the epistles and is mentioned in every chapter.

First Epistle:

- Christ’s coming is a source of personal renewal (1:9-10)
“For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”

Most of the church members were gentiles and who left idol worshipping to God’s worshipping – and were awaiting the coming of His son.

- Christ’s coming is a source of honest service (2:19-20)
“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.”

The apostle’s own biography endorsed his evangelism and stirred up enthusiasm in the Thessalonian church for send the preachers

- Christ’s coming is a source for Christian love (3:12-13)
“And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.” (1 Thess 3:11-12)

They have learned from God to love one another (4:6) and St Paul prayed, so that God might increase them with the virtue of love and He heard him (2 Tess 1:3)

- Christ’s coming is a source for our comfort (4:13-18)
“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means

precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

When Christ comes, the reposed will first rise to meet him in the air. The apostle did not forget to mention the glories accompanying His coming. Compare with “*Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*” (1 Cor 15:51,52).

- Christ’s coming is a source for watching (5:4-6)
“But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.”
- Christ’s coming is a source of holiness (5:23-24)
“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it”

Compare with (2 Peter 3:14)

“Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless”

The Second Epistle:

Christ’s coming gives the believers comfort at persecution time (1:7-10)

“For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.”

In chapter 2, he mentions the signs of the second coming:

The fall and the revelation of the man of sin “the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.” (2:4,8)

Practical commandments for His coming (6:3)

“But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.”

Outline of the First Epistle

The epistle is divided to the introduction, two main parts and the conclusion.

Introduction (1:1-10):

It includes St Paul's greetings as in his other epistles, thanksgiving to God for their faith their love and their service.

First Part: Founding of the Thessalonians church (1:2-3:13)

1. (2:1-12) The apostle's service in Thessalonica along with Silas and Timothy
2. (2:13-16) Zeal of the Thessalonians
3. (2:17-20) St Paul's great wish to return to Thessalonica after his leaving it
4. (3:1-5) Barriers in St Paul's service and his sending Timothy in his place
5. (3:6-13) The good news Timothy carried back to St Paul.

Second Part: Instructions and commands (4:1-5:22):

1. (4:1-12) Commands concerning holiness, the love of the brethren and work.
2. (4:13-18) Discussion concerning the reposed
3. (5:1-11) Discussion concerning the Lord's sudden second coming.
4. Social (5:12-16) and religious (5:17-22) instructions.

Conclusion (5:23-27):

Prayer (5:23-24) and concluding requests (5:25-27)

Outline of the Second Epistle

The epistle is divided into an introduction, two main sections and a conclusion.

Introduction (1:1-12)

Opening (1:1-2)

Thanksgiving and prayer (1:3-12)

First Part: Discussing Christ's second coming

1. (2:1-2) The Anti Christ and the warnings preceding the world end.
2. (2:3-12) The events preceding Christ's coming.
3. (2:13-17) Some encouraging instructions.

Second Part: The practical part of the epistle and includes a group of practical commands:

1. (3:1-5) Asking for prayer and acting according to the delivered teachings.
2. (3:16-18) Special directions to those who behave disorderly and do not want to work.

Conclusion: common to St Paul (3:16-18):

"The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write."

Canonicity of Both Epistles

External Evidence:

Both epistles were used often by many of the early Church Fathers like Clement of Rome and Irenaeus and there was no doubt regarding their authenticity and St Paul's authorship.

Internal Evidence:

The style of the apostle is the same in both epistles, and so many of the words used in them St Paul also used in his other epistles. Following is a survey of the words common between the two epistles and between them and the other epistles:

First: There 46 words common between the two epistles

Second: The common words in the two epistles and St Paul's other epistles:

- 210 words common among the 2nd epistle and the two epistles to the Corinthians and the epistle to Galatians.
- 299 words common among the 1st epistle and the two epistles to the Corinthians, the epistle to the Romans and the epistle to the Galatians.
- 19 words common among the 1st epistle and the imprisonment epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon)
- 7 words common among the 2nd epistle and the imprisonment epistles.
- 7 words common among the 1st epistle, 5 words in the 2nd epistle and the pastoral epistles.

Third: There are 20 words in the 1st epistle, 10 words in the 2nd were not mentioned in any other place in the NT

Fourth: 10 words in the 1st epistle, 11 words in the 2nd common or have similar ones in the other books of the NT.

Till the 19th century there was no doubt regarding the authenticity of the two epistles. However, few critics presented two difficulties related to the link between the two epistles:

- Concerning the different teachings between the two epistles
- The great similarities between them

First Objection:

St Paul mentions different teachings with regards to the 2nd coming. In the 1st epistle, the 2nd coming is sudden "*...the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape...*" (1 Thess 5:1-4). But in the 2nd epistle it is the opposite, for the apostle does not hasten the day of the Lord "*Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition*" (2 Thess 2:3).

Response:

There is no difference or contradiction between the two teachings. For the apostle in the 1st epistle was strengthening the weak and warning them from forgetfulness and the ill preparation for the Lord's Day. Nevertheless, the weak souls misunderstood the apostle's teachings and awaited the Lord's coming between one moment and the other, and left everything and keened to the life of joblessness and disorganization. This led the apostle to alert them in the 2nd epistle that the Lord's Day precedes it specific signs that must take place first.

Second Objection:

Concerning the strong similarities between the two epistles does not mean that the author of the first epistle was unable to write the second one within few months without using the same words and the same style.

It is not true what some scholars claim, among them Holtzmann, that the new material is confined in only 19 verses:

(1:1,5,6,9,12), (2:2-9,11,12,15), (3:2,13,14,17).

Response:

One of the scholars, McCiffirt, explained that one third of the 2nd epistle material is new and that the two epistles share only one third of their materials. He pointed out the new material in the 2nd epistle as follows:

(1:5-12), (2:2,12,15), (3:1,5,10,13,17)

Verses in the two epistles and their counterparts in the OT:

1st Epistle:

16:2	Genesis 15:16
13:3	Genesis 14:5
8:5	Isaiah 59:17

2nd Epistle:

9:1	Isaiah 2:19
3:2	Daniel 7:25
4:2	Ezekiel 28:2
4:2	Daniel 7:25
9:2	Deuteronomy 13:1
11:2	1 Kings 22:22
11:2	Ezekiel 14:7-9

The Epistles to Timothy

The two epistle of our teacher St Paul to Timothy

The First Epistle of our Teacher the Apostle Paul to his disciple Bishop Timothy

Who is Timothy? Timothy is a Greek name meaning “the worshipper of God”. Timothy was from the city of Lystra in the province of Galatia of Iconium, Asia Minor (modern Anadole, Turkey) (Acts 16: 1). His mother Eunice was a Jew who became believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and so his grandmother Lois. Both were known for their faith and righteousness, and they taught timothy holiness so that the Holy Scriptures were embedded in him since his childhood. Thus Timothy was raised on Old Testament Jewish traditions, piety, and goodness (II Timothy 3:15). His father was Greek.

How Timothy new the Apostle Paul? The Apostle Paul met Timothy for the first time on his first missionary journey (25-50AD) during his visit to the city of Lystra (Acts 14:6). This is not directly quoted in the Book of Acts, but can be assumed since when Paul visited Lystra on his second missionary journey, Timothy was already a disciple or Christian (Acts 16: 1-3). This indicates that Timothy accepted the faith at the hands of the apostle Paul earlier (during his first journey), and Paul calls him “son Timothy” (I Timothy 1: 2), and “my beloved and faithful son in the Lord” (I Corinthians 4: 17).

When the Apostle Paul came to Lystra on his second missionary journey (51-54 AD), he found Timothy in this Church “well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium” (Acts 16: 2). Accordingly, Paul chose him as a companion and helper in his Evangelical ministry. Since Timothy was not circumcised, Paul circumcised him, so that the Jews do not revolt against him, and he may be effective in his ministry among them. Paul chose Timothy when he perceived in him this gift and zeal for the service.

The Apostle Paul made Timothy a companion along with Silas in their missionary work. He accompanied them in their mission in Europe, and before that in Phrygia, in Galatia, in Mysia, and in Troas. Also, they went together to Greece and evangelized in Thessalonica, then in Berea (during the second missionary journey). The Book of Acts in Acts 17: 4 mentions that Timothy remained with Silas in Berea, while the Apostle Paul journeyed to Athens and Corinth.

Paul in Athens summoned Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed (Acts 17: 15); in fact they joined Paul in Corinth (Acts 18: 5).

Note: we read in I Thessalonians 3: 1-2, “Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the Gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning the faith”. It is clear from the above that the Apostle Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica from Athens, and that Silas and Timothy did not accompany Paul until he was in Corinth (where he wrote his Epistle t the Thessalonians) (Acts 18: 1 & 5). Afterwards, Paul went to Athens and

from there to Corinth. May be Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia to Corinth where they met Paul, or may be they joined him in Athens, or after he left Athens on his way to Corinth, for we read in I Thessalonians 3: 6, “But now that Timothy has come to us from you...”. For it is known that the Epistle to the Thessalonians was written from Corinth.

Timothy remained with Paul in Corinth as mentioned in the opening of the two Epistles to the Thessalonians (I Thessalonians 1: 1 & II Thessalonians 1: 1), which confirms his remaining with Paul during the writing of the Epistle.

Afterwards in the Scriptures, we find Timothy serving the Apostle Paul during his long stay in Ephesus, on his third missionary journey (54-58 AD). From Ephesus, Paul sent Timothy to Macedonia and then to Corinth to fix some problems there (Acts 19: 22).

Acts 19: 22-22, “So he sent (from Ephesus) into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.”

I Corinthians 4: 17, “For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.”

I Corinthians 16: 10, “And if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do.”

It seems that Timothy returned to Ephesus for a reason shortly before the Apostle Paul left Ephesus; for Timothy and Erastus arrived in Macedonia before Paul (see Acts 19: 22 above).

Timothy accompanied the Apostle Paul in Macedonia, for he was with him when he wrote his second Epistle to the Corinthians from a City in Macedonia (57 AD) (II Corinthians 1: 1) on his third missionary journey. Both went together to Corinth (Romans 16: 21), “Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen greet you.” For it is known that the Epistle to the Romans was written from Corinth around 57 AD.

Timothy also accompanied the Apostle Paul on his return to Asia from Macedonia on the return of the third missionary journey (Acts 20: 3-4).

It is also possible that Timothy accompanied the Apostle Paul to Jerusalem on his fifth and last visit to this city (I Corinthians 16: 3).

Timothy was with the Apostle Paul in Rome during Paul’s first imprisonment there, as the Apostle Paul mentions him in his Epistles written there:

Philippians 1:1, “Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the Bishops and deacons.”

II Corinthians 1:1, “Paul an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the Church of God which is at Corinth.”

Philemon 1:1, “Paul, a prisoner of Christ, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer.”

From this point on, we do not hear in the Scriptures about Timothy until Paul mentions him in the Pastoral Epistles when Timothy was pasturing the Church in Ephesus: “As I urged you (Timothy) when I went to Macedonia, remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine” (I Timothy 1: 3).

His ordination as Bishop:

We conclude from the two Epistles to Timothy that Timothy was consecrated to the ministry by the laying on of the hands of the Apostle Paul, while Timothy was still young. He was probably ordained as Bishop of the City of Ephesus; we do not know, however, when this priestly ordination happened. I Timothy 4: 14 reads “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.” II Timothy 1: 6 reads, “Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.”

This priestly ordination was according to a prophecy regarding Timothy, “This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare” (I Timothy 1:18). Timothy was doing the work of an evangelist, “do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (II Timothy 4: 5).

Remaining of his life and ministry:

We conclude from Timothy 4: 9 & 21 that the Apostle Paul asked Timothy to come to him in Rome while he was imprisoned there for the second time, “Be diligent to come to me quickly”, and, “Do your utmost to come to me before winter.” Timothy went indeed to Rome, but he was imprisoned also there. He was released from prison afterward, for the Apostle Paul says in Hebrews 13: 23, “Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly.” This is the last we hear of Timothy in the Scriptures.

Church tradition tells us that Timothy lived long after the martyrdom of his teacher and spiritual father Saint Paul the Apostle. It is said that he was martyred in 97AD at the hands of idolaters in Ephesus by beating with rods and stoning with rocks on one of their feasts.

His personality and virtues:

The picture of this man that we know very little of his labor and virtues appears to us in what was said about Timothy in many Books of the New Testament:

We feel his zeal for the work of the Lord before his circumcision and in spite of his poor physical health, for he suffered from pain in the stomach and other infirmities, “No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities” (I Timothy 5: 23).

It seems that he feared a lot, “And if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do. Therefore let no one despise him. But send him on his journey in peace, that he may come to me; for I am waiting for him with the brethren” (I Corinthians 16: 10-11).

It seems also that Timothy under-estimated his authority, “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, and in purity” (I Timothy 4: 12). Timothy needed admonition in ministry, “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God” (II Timothy 1: 8).

Commendations of the Apostle Paul to Timothy:

The Apostle describes Timothy by the following commendations:

- “My fellow worker” (Romans 16:21).
- “Our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ” (I Thessalonians 3: 2).
- “A true son in the faith” (I Timothy 2:1).
- “A beloved son” (II Timothy 2: 1).
- “My beloved and faithful son in the Lord” (I Corinthians 4: 17).
- “He does the work of the Lord, as I also do” (I Corinthians 16: 10).
- “For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us – by me, Silvanus, and Timothy” (II Corinthians 1: 19). Here Paul refers to the harmony of thoughts between himself and Timothy.
- The Apostle Paul refers to Timothy in the opening of his Epistle to Philemon as “our brother” (Philemon 1).

Date and Place of the First Epistle to Timothy:

This Epistle is connected with the necessity of the sudden departure of the Apostle Paul from Ephesus to Macedonia, “As I urged you when I went into Macedonia – remain in Ephesus...” (I Timothy 1: 3).

It seems that Paul expected delay in his return to Timothy, for he wrote, “These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write that may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God” (I Timothy 3: 14-15).

From the above we may conclude that the Epistle was written from a place in Macedonia; but when did Paul leave Ephesus to Macedonia leaving Timothy behind? Without doubt, this did not happen after his first visit to Ephesus (Acts 18: 20-21) during his return from his second missionary journey (45-51 AD), for this time he did not leave Ephesus to Macedonia, but passed shortly through Ephesus on his return to Jerusalem to attend the feast of the Pentecost there.

This did not happen either when the Apostle Paul left Ephesus after his long stay in it (around three years), on his third missionary journey (45-58AD); for this time the Apostle Paul did not leave Timothy in Ephesus, but sent him to Macedonia and to Corinth, “So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time” (Acts 19: 22). Also in I Corinthians 4: 17 we read, “For this reason I have sent Timothy to you...”; for it is well known that Paul wrote his first Epistle to the Corinthians from Ephesus.

There is an opinion that assumes that the Apostle Paul visited Macedonia during his long stay in Ephesus, but the Book of Acts did not record it.

Accordingly, the evidence seems that Paul wrote I Timothy after his release from his first imprisonment and his resuming his missionary work before his second imprisonment in Rome. This is the period from 64-67 AD. Possibly this was after his visit to Spain and Crete, for he went afterward to Ephesus, and then left it to Macedonia. This happened around 66-67 AD, even though the Bible Dictionary puts it in 64 or 65 AD.

Evidence of the correctness of this opinion: the strong resemblance between I & II Timothy indicates that they were both written at the same time or very close to the same time. It is known that II Timothy was written from prison during Paul’s final imprisonment in Rome, which ended in his martyrdom in the year 67 or 68 AD.

Evidence of this opinion in what was written in the book “Guide to the Seekers”:

“This Epistle to Timothy, along with the Second Epistle that we know for sure that Paul wrote it from his last imprisonment shortly before the end of his life, and along with his pastoral Epistle to Titus (that is priestly), for he wrote them to the two renown pastors, Timothy and Titus, offer a good evidence.

Evidently, who studies these three Epistles in detail will conclude from their style and material that they were written at the same period in the life of the Apostle. Also he will conclude that they were written at a time when Churches were suffering from false teachers.

Since both Epistles to Timothy are similar in these two aspects, there is no resemblance in these aspects to the Epistle to the Ephesians... Therefore we conclude that the latter Epistle (to the Ephesians) was written at a different period, contrary to the opinion that locates it in between the two Epistles to Timothy.”

Purpose of the Epistle:

1. The Epistle addresses the difficulties facing Timothy. The Church in Ephesus suffered from heresies and false doctrines. Even though the Apostle did not identify these heresies, we may deduct from his writing their nature: they were Jewish heresies related to the thinking of the believers. Paul addressed these heresies and false teachings as follows:

- I Timothy 1: 6-7
- I Timothy 1: 20
- I Timothy 5: 19-25
- I Timothy 1: 4
- I Timothy 4: 7
- I Timothy 6: 20
- I Timothy 4: 1-5

Paul wrote this Epistle to Timothy in order to warn him of these false teachings that the Church in Ephesus suffered from.

2. Encouraging Timothy in ministry due to his youth.
3. Organizing the Church in Ephesus and setting the duties of the Bishop and of the deacon, and establishing the criteria for their choosing. Also the Epistle was written to organize the different groups of believers, from widows, to ministers, to rich, and others.

Outline of the Epistle:

1. Introduction: includes greeting and thanksgiving (I Timothy 1: 1-2).
2. Instructions from the Apostle to his disciple regarding the ministry he urged him to accomplish in Ephesus. Admonishing to be a good example to all (I Timothy 1: 3-20).
3. Instructions from the Apostle regarding the life of the Church, its organization, how to worship, and the behavior of men and women (I Timothy 2 & 3) ;
 - A. Special commandments for prayer (I Timothy 2 & 2)
 - B. Forbidding women to teach in Church and dominate men (I Timothy 2: 11-15)
 - C. Selection of Church ministers and their qualifications (I Timothy 3: 1-16):
 - Special commandments to bishops (I Timothy 3: 1-7).
 - Special commandments to deacons and deaconesses (I Timothy 3: 8-13).
 - Purpose of these commandments (I Timothy 3: 8-13).
4. Apostle's instructions regarding false teachings, followed by spiritual instructions on the importance of how Timothy should behave and its consequence on the spiritual life (I Timothy 4).
 - A. List of the false teachings called for by the heretics (4: 1-4).
 - B. Laws that Timothy ought to follow in his behavior against the heretics (I Timothy 3: 6-16).

5. Instructions and teachings regarding the relation of Timothy with the many groups of believers:
 - A. Consideration for age and sex (I Timothy 5: 1 & 2)
 - B. Duties toward widows (I Timothy 5: 3-16).
 - C. Duties toward the elders (priests) (I Timothy 5: 17-21).
 - D. Miscellaneous warnings (laying of the hands – use of liquor – etc.) (I Timothy 5: 22-25).
 - E. Duties of slaves (I Timothy 6: 1-2).
 - F. Other warnings concerning false teachers (I Timothy 6: 3-10).
6. Conclusion:
 - A. Closing commandments to Timothy (I Timothy 6: 11-16).
 - B. Duties of the rich (I Timothy 6: 17-19).
 - C. Other commandments to Timothy (I Timothy 6: 20-21).

The Second Epistle of our Teacher the Apostle Paul to his disciple Bishop Timothy

Date and Place of the Epistle:

This Epistle was written from Rome, for Paul says to Timothy regarding Onesiphorus, “The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me” (II Timothy 1: 16-17).

The Apostle Paul wrote the Epistle after he was arrested and put in prison for the second time in Rome, around 67 AD.

This is the last Epistle written by our teacher the Apostle Paul while imprisoned, for he says:

- “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner” (II Timothy 1: 8)
- “And was not ashamed of my chain (II Timothy 1: 16).
- “Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained” (II Timothy 2: 8-9).

The conditions of this imprisonment differ from those of the first imprisonment where he wrote the four captivity Epistles, namely to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, to the Colossians, and to Philemon:

- He is now persecuted by Rome because of the belief of all other believers (II Timothy 2: 9).

- Virtually totally abandoned by all his friends from Asia, except for Onesiphorus (II Timothy 1: 15), “This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus (II Timothy 1: 15).
- He anticipates his execution, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only, but also to all who have loved His appearing” (II Timothy 4: 6-8).
- His friends who were with him in his first imprisonment in Rome did not remain with him: “Be diligent to come to me quickly; for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica – Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me” (II Timothy 4: 9-12).
- However, many met around him, “Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren” (II Timothy 4: 21).
- It appears that Paul was prosecuted more than once during this last imprisonment in Rome, for he refers in the Epistle to “his first defense”. It appears that he wrote this Epistle after all prosecutions ended and before his martyrdom, “At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me (II Timothy 4: 16).

Unlike Paul’s confident hope of his release and many stood by him during his first imprisonment in Rome, the first Chapter of this Epistle may not refer to this first imprisonment, but probably to one of his prosecutions during his second imprisonment. In the Epistle to the Philippians, Paul refers to those who stood by him, saying, “Just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel, you all are partakers with me of the grace” (Philippians 1: 7).

Also, “But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the Gospel. So that it has become evident to the whole palace guard and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ” (Philippians 1: 12-14).

Characteristics of the Epistle:

1. This Epistle has its personal characteristics more than any other Pastoral Epistle: The Epistle revolve around Timothy, the faithful companion of Paul, who needed encouragement in his ministry to face the difficulties imposed on him by the false teachings of the group of heretics in the Church at Ephesus, and thus he may complete the ministry of the Apostle Paul.
2. This Epistle has a historical importance, for it points to the period of the life of the Apostle Paul post his first imprisonment in Rome:

The Epistle presents a picture of the good and ideal Christian shepherd:

- He cares for duties of ministry and holds on to true teachings and sound doctrines.
- He is ready to endure tribulations as a good soldier of the Lord Christ.
- He evangelizes in the name of Jesus who was raised from the dead.

- He interprets the word of truth soundly, and resists false teachings.

The Epistle presents a picture of this giant of an Evangelist who is aware that his end is near:

- He wrote this Epistle while awaiting his death (II Timothy 4: 6-8), and it is considered his last will and testimony from an apostolic revered father to his son in the Lord.
- It is the last Epistle of the Apostle Paul, written after a faithful struggle in ministry. We see him in this Epistle ready to face death with the spirit of martyrdom.
- Looking back, the Apostle recounts the mercies of God and His many cares in the darkest circumstances, “But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion (II Timothy 4: 17).
- Looking at the future, we see that peace and joy fill his soul with happiness and hope, “And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His kingdom” (II Timothy 4: 18). He awaits the heavenly crown, “I have fought the good fight... Finally, there is laid for me the crown of righteousness” (II Timothy 4: 7-8).

3. The Epistle Contains sound doctrines of great value with respect to the Holy Scriptures, for they testify to the inspiration of the Bible, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (II Timothy 3: 16-17).

Purpose of the Epistle:

1. First Theme: Paul is aware that his end is near and asks Timothy to hasten to come to Rome and bring Mark with him. He said about Mark, “he is useful to me for ministry (II Timothy 4:11). It is certain that Paul called for Timothy to come in order to pass to him the fatherly practical instructions of ministry. Paul was not certain that Timothy will make it on time to Rome before his death; accordingly, he ended his Epistle with the following series of exhortations he wished to convey to Timothy:

- He exhorts him to hold on to genuine faith that dwelt first in the disciples (II Timothy 1: 5).
- He exhorts him to hold fast to sound words (II Timothy 1: 13).
- He exhorts him to endure hardship as a good soldier to Jesus Christ, without being entangled with the affairs of this life, and to compete according to the rules (II Timothy 2: 3-10).
- He exhorts him to avoid false teachings (II Timothy 2: 16).
- He exhorts him not to quarrel but be gentle to all, be able to teach, be patient in difficulties, and to correct in humility those who are in opposition (II Timothy 2: 24-25).

- He exhorts him to continue in the things he has learned, being assured of whom he has learned them (II Timothy 3: 14-17).
2. Second Theme: Challenge from false teachers and heretics that the Church in Ephesus was exposed to. The Apostle Paul felt that the Church in Ephesus that he left Timothy in charge of needed instructions and admonitions. The Church was still suffering from the heresies referred to in his first Epistle to Timothy:
- “Charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers” (II Timothy 2: 14).
 - “But shun profane and idle babble, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some (II Timothy 2: 16-18).
 - “Men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith (II Timothy 3: 8), and “and they will turn their ears from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (II Timothy 4: 4).
3. Third Theme: Exhort the Church, for it was under the pressure of persecution:
- “Share with me the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God” (II Timothy 1: 8).
 - “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (II Timothy 3: 12).
 - “You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ... If we endure, we shall also reign with Him” (II Timothy 2: 3 & 12).
 - “But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (II Timothy 4: 5).

Outline of the Epistle:

In addition to the introduction and concluding remarks, the Epistle is composed of two major sections:

Section I: Perseverance without fear, but with faith for the sake of the Gospel (II Timothy 1: 3 to 2: 3).

- Paul exhorts Timothy to stir up his zeal for the Gospel and to remain a faithful believer in Jesus Christ (II Timothy 1: 3-8). The discourse consists of the following points:
 1. Thanksgiving to God for Timothy (II Timothy 1: 3-5).
 2. Exhortation to Timothy for perseverance with courage for the sake of the Gospel (II Timothy 1: 6-14).
 3. The turning away of some believers and praise to Onesiphorus (II Timothy 1: 15-18).

- Paul exhorts Timothy to persevere (II Timothy 2: 1-13). The discourse consists of the following points:
 1. The minister of the Gospel must serve with endurance and patience, and without obsession with the matters of life and the world (II Timothy 2: 11-13).
 2. Future consequences of the Christian walk and the Christian ministers (II Timothy 2: 11-13).

Section II: Perseverance in fighting false teachings and heresies that the Church of Ephesus was exposed to (II Timothy 2: 14-26).

- Paul exhorts Timothy to walk in a certain way in order to hold on to the truth and expose the doctrinal errors (II Timothy 2: 14-16). This discourse consist of the following points:
 1. Position the servant of the Gospel must take to combat the false teachers (II Timothy 2: 14-21).
 2. Instructions to Timothy to define his behavior and pattern with regard to the believers and to the false teachers (II Timothy 2: 22-26).
- Paul explains what the future holds for the spiritual life of the Church (II Timothy 3: 1 to 4: 8). The discourse consists of the following points:
 1. Difficult times and perils that the Church is exposed to (II Timothy 3: 1-9).
 2. Paul call Timothy to be strong in the faith (II Timothy 3: 10-17).
 3. Paul calls Timothy to continue to preach the word and endure the sufferings (II Timothy 4: 1-8).

Concluding Remarks (II Timothy 4: 6-22)

1. The Apostle needs Timothy back in Rome (II Timothy 4: 9-13).
2. Some news (II Timothy 4: 14-18).
3. Greeting and farewell (II Timothy 4: 19-22)

Important Lessons in the Two Epistles to Timothy

Christ in the two Epistle to Timothy

Both Epistles to Timothy are Pastoral, sent by the Apostle Paul to a minister pasturing important Churches. This minister earned the trust of the Apostle Paul, and Paul found godliness in his walk.

In the two Epistles we find that Paul is exhorting the young Timothy to persevere in the good fight, to endure the sufferings, and to be an example to the believers. Paul also addresses the following:

1. Purity of the Gospel: Paul stresses the need for sound teachings. False teachings that Paul exhorted Timothy to combat are similar to the false teachings of the twentieth century.
2. Purity of the word: sound teaching for prayer.
3. Faithful service: among the most important duties of service is dedication to God. Timothy was promised salvation when serving faithfully, in righteousness, and with dedication (I Timothy 4: 16).
4. Importance and authority of Holy Books (I Timothy 6: 3, II Timothy 3: 15-17, and II Timothy 4: 1-4).
5. Important Christology doctrines: Christ our Redeemer (I Timothy 1: 15 & 2: 3 & 4: 10). Christ is our Mediator (I Timothy 2: 6), our Teacher (I Timothy 6: 3), our King (I Timothy 6: 15), and our Leader (II Timothy 2: 3).

We also find two prophecies in these two Epistles about the falling-away:

First Prophecy (I Timothy 4: 1-5), “Now the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God has created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received by thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”

Second Prophecy (II Timothy 3: 1-5), “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away.”

The falling-away described in this Prophecy clearly points to the sins of the present age. May be Paul is referring to that opposer, the son of perdition, that was spoken of in the two Epistle to the Thessalonians.

Legitimacy of the First Epistle of our Teacher the Apostle Paul to his disciple the Bishop Timothy:

- There was no doubt in the early Church of attributing the Epistle to the Apostle Paul, nor to its canonicity.
- Many of the quotes of the Epistle are found in the writings of Clements of Rome, of Polycarp, of Hugsypus, of Athenagorus, and of Theophilus.
- The Epistle was included in the old Latin and Syrian translations of the Bible. Also the Moritory Affidavit attributes this Epistle to the Apostle Paul.
- The following early Church Fathers refer to the Epistle by name: Jerome, Clements of Alexandria, and Tertullian. Eusebius of Caesarea includes the Epistle among the canonical New Testament Books.

Importance of the First Epistle to Timothy:

First Timothy is an important Epistle containing pastoral instruction for the Church in all ages, especially on how to deal with titles of the clergy, and on keeping the faith and sound doctrines in the face of heresies provoked by false teachers.

Legitimacy of the Second Epistle of our Teacher the Apostle Paul to his disciple the Bishop Timothy:

The Church never was attacked on the legitimacy of the Second Epistle. Church tradition from old testifies to the authenticity and canonicity of the Epistle.

The Epistle was directly quoted in the writings of Clements of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, and Theophilus of Antioch. The Moritary Affidavit refers to it as an Epistle of the Apostle Paul. It has been quoted with reference to its title since the middle of the Second Century AD>

Christ in both Epistles to Timothy

- Christ our Savior: I Timothy 1: 15 & 2: 3 & 4: 7
- Christ our Mediator: I Timothy 2: 5
- Christ our Redeemer: I Timothy 2: 6
- Christ our Teacher: I Timothy 6: 3
- Christ our Everlasting King: “Our Lord Jesus Christ... He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen” (I Timothy 6: 14-16).
- Christ our President and Leader: “You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (II Timothy 2: 3).

Two Notes on the important teaching in the two Epistles to Timothy

First: Importance of the Holy Books and their authority:

I Timothy 6: 3 & II Timothy 3: 15-17 & 4: 1-4, “I charge you... preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort...”

Second: Two prophecies regarding the falling-away in the last times.

I Timothy 4: 1-5 & II Timothy 3: 1-5

The Epistle to Titus

The epistle of our teacher St Paul to Titus

St Paul address the epistle to “*Titus, a true son in our common faith*” (Titus 1:4).

Who is Titus:

- He is one St Paul’s loyal disciples, a faithful companion and co-worker.
(2 Co 8:6) “*So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well.*”
(2 Co 8:16) “*But thanks be to God who puts* the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus.*”
(2 Co 8:23) “*If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you.*”
- Though the name Titus is not mentioned in the book of Acts neither do we meet him in the same book among those who accompanied St Paul. All we know about him comes from few epistles, which led some to suggest that (Titus) is another name to one of St Paul’s companions like Silas or Justus (Acts 18:7). However, there is no way we can confirm this suggestion.
- We do not know anything about his life prior to his missionary work and all we know is that he was a gentile Greek and did not agree with St Paul regarding his circumcision fearing that this might give the enemies of the gospel and faith the opportunity to assail his teachings “*Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you*” (Galatians 1:1, 3-5)

His conversion to Christianity:

- Most scholars agree that he converted on the hands of St Paul who calls him his in faith (Tim 1:4). But it seems that his conversion was in the early stages as he attended the council in Jerusalem with St Paul in the year 50 (Galatians 2:1)
- He was on a strong relationship with St Paul and Barnabas in Antioch and was one of the delegates whom the Church of Antioch sent along with St Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem at the time of the council there. Comparing **(Acts 15:2)** “*Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and*

elders, about this question.” and **(Galatians 2:1,3)** suggests that Titus most likely was originally from Antioch.

His missionary work with St Paul:

- While St Paul was serving in Ephesus for some time during his third missionary trip (54 – 58 AD), he twice sent Titus to Corinth:
 1. The first time he wanted Titus to put in order urgent matters and problems of great importance (2 Co 8:6). It seems that he carried the St Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians (2 Co 2:13)
 2. He sent him the second time to collect donations (2 Co 8:16,17) and more than like he was the carrier of the second epistle to the Corinthians.

Upon leaving Ephesus, St Paul longed to meet Titus in Troas (2 Co 2:12,13) *“Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia.”*

In Macedonia Titus sent St Paul good news:

“Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more. Therefore we have been comforted in your comfort. And we rejoiced exceedingly more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I am not ashamed. But as we spoke all things to you in truth, even so our boasting to Titus was found true.” (2 Co 7:6,7,13,14)

- Nothing is mentioned of Titus till after St Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome
- From this epistle, it is evident that St Paul left Titus in Crete to administer the churches of this island; he was St Paul’s assistant in Crete as was Timothy in Ephesus. According to our Church’s tradition, St Paul ordained him bishop over its churches. *“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—“* (Titus 1:5)
- St Paul asked him to meet him in Nicopolis *“When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.”* (Titus 3:12)

His Life:

He was free of any bad intention concerning service *“Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same steps?”* (2 Co 12:18)

Through tradition we know that Titus lived long and reposed in the Lord while he was in the island of Crete, which its people, till now, consider him their great saint.

Titus and Timothy:

Titus	Timothy
Older “ <i>Let no one despise you.</i> ” (Titus 2:15)	Younger “ <i>Let no one despise your youth</i> ” (1 Timothy 4:12)
He went to Corinth diligently “ <i>But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord.</i> ” (2 Corinthians 16,17)	Went to Corinth with some hesitation “ <i>Now if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear</i> ” (1 Corinthians 16:10)

Time and Place of the Epistle Writing:

- Most likely, the epistle was written after St Paul’s release from his first imprisonment in Rome (63 AD) and before his second imprisonment in Rome (67 AD)
- If we assume that the winter season to which St Paul refers in (Titus 3:12) is the same season he talks about in his second epistle to Timothy (4:21), then this would be the beginnings of year 67 AD.
- It was probably written in Ephesus
- Some suggest that the epistle was written in Nicopolis based on verse 3:12. However, the word “there” means that St Paul was not in Nicopolis when he wrote the epistle, otherwise he would have said “here”.
- It is known that there were two cities by the name Nicopolis:
 1. On the Eastern border of Macedonia.
 2. On the Western border of Macedonia.There is no way we can identify to which one St Paul referred.

Church of Crete:

The beginnings of the church in Crete is not clear:

- It may have been founded by Cretans who were in Jerusalem on Pentecost, received the faith and went back carrying their new faith to the island “*Cretans and Arabs--we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.*” (Acts 2:11)

- St Paul visited the Cretan island during the last part of his life where he put the ministry in order, which he left to his spiritual son, Titus, after his leaving the island (5:1).

The church there existed of:

- Both Jews and gentile members (1:10)
- Various age groups and classes. (2:1-10)

Cretans were of bad reputation:

(Titus 1:12) *“One of them, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.”* Saying “this is a true testimony”

Even after receiving faith, some of them did not abandon their old ways.

It seems that the corruption of which the Cretan church suffered was the same as that of the church in Ephesus, and thus it is likely that the Jewish factor was dominant.

This is evident through St Paul’s admonition to these distorted thoughts as follows:

- (1:10,11) *“For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.”* Accordingly, he strongly rebuked them so that they may have unblemished faith and to not listen to Jewish illusions and earthly commands.
- (3:9-11) *“But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.”*

Purpose of the Epistle:

1. To warn his disciple Titus of false teachings and conveying the method of dealing with those who reject his word, urging him on following the right teaching and keeping his chastity and good reputation, for the Cretans were enslaved to their lusts and worldly desires.
2. To request Titus to come to him in the near future ... *“be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.”* (3:12).
3. To advise him of the right shepherding and of the right ministry (1:5).
4. To make clear the characteristics of which the elders, bishops, disabled and the young should adorn themselves.
5. To give him the command *“in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you”* (2:7,8)

Uniqueness of the Epistle:

1. This epistle is the same as the other pastoral epistles in its personal character, for it did not address a specific church or a group of churches but to a single person who is St Paul's spiritual son and his companion in the Lord's work. With that said, the personal character of this epistle does not measure to that of the 2nd epistle to Timothy.
2. It is clear from "*Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority.*" (2:15) that the epistle was also addressed to the Cretan church, which was under the Titus' pastoral care to the extent that some name it "the Epistle to Cretans". Because, St Paul's goal from the epistle was not to teach Titus as much as to make it pastoral in the organization of the churches on that island, and the principle focus of the epistle is clerical and moral, for it is concerned with the Church and the moral life of its members.
3. There is a lot of similarities between this epistle and the first epistle to Timothy to the point that there is a good chance the two epistles were written during the same time and in the same circumstances. Although the first epistle to Timothy is small, but it almost carries the same meaning.
4. We do not find new teachings in this epistle not found in St Paul's other epistles.

The most important teachings in this epistle:

- (2:11-14) "*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.*"
- (3:4-8) "*But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.*"

These two verses greatly emphasize and declare that grace is the foundation and cornerstone of salvation:

Note in (2:11) that this grace encompass faith with its past, present and future. The past for Jesus Christ laid down His life for to redeem us from every sin. The present for "*purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works*". And as for the future he says: "Awaiting the blessed hope and the revelation of the God's great glory and our savior Jesus Christ"; as if the second coming of which St Paul had written to the church of Thessalonica for over than 13 years ago. This same hope was present with St Paul during his last days. See:

- (1 Timothy 6:14) "... until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing"

- (2 Timothy 4:8) “*and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing*” as if these are St Paul’s last words.

There are two phrases repeated often in the epistle to Titus:

“God our savior” and “Jesus our savior”. Both are used interchangeably in all the chapters of the epistle as if St Paul is proving the divinity of Christ that is (Christ) is (God).

The epistle contents:

I – Preface (1:1-4)

II – 1st section (1:5-15)

It includes instructions on choosing good servants for the ministry:

- Choosing bishops and their qualification (1:5-9)
- Depiction of the false teachers and the ways of confronting them (1:10-16)

III – 2nd section (2:1-3:11)

It includes instructions to Titus concerning the ministry and his conduct towards the different group of believers:

- The virtues believers should acquire (chapter 2)
- The basis of the Christian behavior with the external world (society) (3:1-8)
- Special instructions to Titus (3:9-11)

IV – The Ending (3:12-15)

Pastoral Epistles

Those three epistles (the two to Timothy and the one to Titus) put across a very detailed system on good shepherding and the principle ideas focus on the shepherds and the duties of their post in protecting the flock against heresies as follows:

Characteristics of the bishop and the deacon:

(1 Timothy 3:1-13) “*This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop,* he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. Likewise their wives must be reverent, not*

slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

(2 Timothy 1:6) “Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.”

(Titus 1:7-9) “For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”

- Fighting heresies and false teachings:

(1 Timothy 6:3-6,20,21) “If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself. O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith.”

(2 Timothy 2:16,17) “But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer.”

(Titus 1:10-16) “For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. One of them, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.”

The Epistle to Philemon

The epistle of our teacher St Paul to Philemon

Philemon:

Greek name means “Lover”

The epistles is addressed to “*Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house*” (1,2)

He was a citizen of Colossi and was considered among those in the high class. For, he had slaves and was able to have gusts in his house, as well, as prepare a residence for St Paul (22).

St Paul addresses him saying: “hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.” (5-7)

Philemon became a Christian on the hands of St Paul (19), most probably when they met in Ephesus.

There was a church in Philemon’s house and St Paul calls him “fellow laborer” (1) and was of great love, liberality, and true friendliness (7-5). The phrase “the church in your house” points to the believers who used to gather in his house and from them the church was formed.

Since St Paul did not visit Colossi (Co 2:1), so it is more than likely that Philemon became a Christian in Ephesus during the apostle’s long stay there (Acts 19:10).

It is likely that *Apphia* was Philemon’s wife and *Archippus* was his son, who seemed to have had a leading role in the service as St Paul says “*And say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.”*” (Co 4:17)

Purpose:

Philemon had a slave, Onesimus (meaning “beneficial”), believed on the hands of St Paul’s during his first imprisonment in Rome and accompanied Tychicus during his trip from Rome to Colossi (Co 4:9)³⁹.

Onesimus fled from Philemon, his master, and he might have stolen from him (19,18) and when he reached Rome, he met St Paul who probably knew him during his stay in Ephesus). He received the faith on St Paul’s hands (10) worked his repentance and asked him to go back to his master(10).

³⁹ Tradition says that Onesimus became bishop of Pirie and was martyred.

St Paul wanted to keep Onesimus for his own service during his imprisonment in Rome, but did not want to do that until his master's agreement "whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel. But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary." (13,14). At the same time, St Paul wanted Onesimus to ask for his master's forgiveness, and to have his master forgive him, for his wrongdoing, and to receive him. For this reason, he sent Onesimus carrying this epistle urging him to receive Philemon to receive him in spite of Onesimus' misconduct.

Hoever, St Paul asked Philemon to treat Onesimus in light of the Christian love, which has elevated the treatment of people among themselves; "*no longer as a slave but more than a slave--a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me.*" (16,17). He mentioned his own great love to Onesimus (10,12) and was ready to repay him what Onesimus took.(18,19)

Onesimus did go back to his master carrying the epistle accompanied by Tychicus who carried the epistle to Colossi (Co 4:7-9) and the one to Ephesus (Eph 6:21,22). The three epistles were written in Rome and were sent all at the same time around 62 AD (61-63 AD).

Epistle Properties:

- The epistle is magnificent and rich revealing St Paul's delicate feelings, his kind manner and his good relations with his friends. It also shows the affect Christianity has on social relationships in general, love and justice, which societies organized around again. And the epistle is characterized with eloquence, gracefulness and plasticity for what it has of courtesy and good manners. That is why some scholars have called it the "well mannered epistle". In it, the apostle addresses Philemon in phrases that are both skillful in speech and delicate heartedness. For as he has great trust in whatever he commands, he still does not commands but rather requests "*Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting*" (8). The he points to the spiritual benefits that proceeded from what we call material loss "*who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me*" (11). And in gentleness, he addresses him saying: "*whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel. But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.*" (13,14) Eloquently, he reminds him of his (Philemon) indebtedness "*But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay--not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides.*" (18,19).
- This epistle is strongly connected to the epistle to the Colossians for they were written during the same time and were sent to the same city. With the exception of Titus, the two epistles incorporate greetings to the same persons (Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke) (23,24), (Co4:9-12). However, it differs than the epistle to Colossi in that it is a personal letter⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ Philemon was not sent to just one person, but to a family and to the believers gathered at Philemon's house.

- Though the epistle is short, it bears strong social views challenging the system of slavery and elevating the value of man equating all the people alike. This is apparent from St Paul's sayings about Onesimus the slave asking Philemon to accept him:
 - "as his own heart" (12),
 - "no longer as a slave but more than a slave--a beloved brother" (16)
 - "receive him as you would me" (17)

It may be said that the idea to obliterate the slavery system is not clear as St Paul is sending Onismus as a slave under his master's command. However, St Paul talks about Onismus as "beloved brother". Also, refer to (Co 4:9) "*with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you*" (Co 4:9)

So, this personal letter proceeding from God's servant is like a symbol of social reorganization where Christianity breaks the yoke of slavery.

Place and Time of Writing:

The epistle was written in Rome during St Paul's first imprisonment, to which St Paul refers by saying: "*Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus ...*" (1) and "*Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you*" (23).

The epistle was written at the same time as that of the epistles to Colossi and Ephesus, and was sent to Philemon by Onesimus who headed to Colossi accompanied by Tychicus who carried the epistle to Colossi (Co 4:7-9) and the one to Ephesus (Eph 6:21,22). Thus, the epistle was written around 62 AD.

Contents:

1. Introduction (1-7)
2. Main idea (8-21)
3. Conclusion (22-25) in which St Paul asks Philemon to prepare him a residence as he expects to be released soon.

Christ in the epistle:

The story contained in this epistle is an expression of what Christ did for us. He, not only, intercedes for us when we disobeyed and went astray, but rather does what is far greater: He knew the extent of our disobedience and our sins, so he asked His Father saying: "Count this on me" "I will repay"

The epistle Canonicity:

- External Evidence:
 - There was never a doubt regarding the canonicity of the epistle and St Paul's authorship.
 - Eusebius mentions it among St Paul's epistles
 - Mentioned in the Muratorian fragment and St Paul as the author.
 - Used by Origen and Tertullian in their writings.
 - St Jerome defends it against those who reject St Paul as the author.
 - Was used by Marcion

- Clement of Alexandria and Irinaeus did not refer to it.
- External Evidence:
The epistle bears the same style as St Paul’s other epistles and has similar opening and ending.

It contains some phrases never used by St Paul in his other epistles like (command (8), sending (12), guest room (22), repay (19), joy (20). However, these words should not be taken as a reason against St Paul’s authorship, as some scholars did. For the style of the epistle is the same as that found in St Paul’s other epistles.

Words and phrases common between this epistle and the other imprisonment epistles:

Word	Philemon	Other Epistles
Prisoner of Christ Jesus	1	(Eph 3:1, 4:1), (2 Tim 1:8)
Laborer	1	(Phil 2:25), (Ti 4:3), (Co 4:11)
What is fitting	8	(Eph 5:3,4), (Co 3:18)
Fellow prisoner	23	(Co 4:10)
Beloved brother	16	(Eph 6:21), (Co 4:7)

The phrase “*whom I have begotten while in my chains*” (10) reminds us with “*in Christ Jesus I have begotten you*” (1 Co 4:15)

We can also compare this epistle to St Paul’s other epistles as follows:

Philemon	St Paul’s Other Epistles
2	(Co 4:17), (2 Ti 2:3)
5	(Co 1:3,4, 9)
6	(Ti 1:8)
7	(2 Co 7:4)
10	(Co 4:9)
11	(2 Ti 4:11)
13	(Ti 2:30)
14	(2 Co 9:7)
17	(1 Ti 6:2)
17	(Ro 14:1, 15:17)
22	(Ti 1:25, 2:24)

The Epistle to the Hebrews

The epistle of our teacher St Paul to the Hebrews

Author:

The only epistle in which St Paul did not mention his name. This led to some debate over its author during the first centuries. It has been set in the Eastern Churches that St Paul is the author.

It is important to note that St Paul did not mention his name, so that the epistle might be received by the Jews who were the epistle's intended audience, and who considered the apostle an enemy. This was St Clement's opinion, which was mentioned by Eusebius. Also, Clement mentioned another reason, for St Paul not mentioning his name, that because he was entrusted on preaching the gentiles, he did not consider himself the Hebrews apostle and out of politeness did not mention his name; it was only his excellent knowledge that permitted to write to the Jews.

The evidence pointing to St Paul as the writer is that the writer was familiar with St Paul's environment. For the writer mentioned Timothy who was near St Paul during his first imprisonment (Philippi 2:19) and was awaiting him in his second imprisonment (2 Timothy 4:21). In addition, the final farewell "grace be with you" is consistent with the endings in all of St Paul's epistles.

To Whom the Epistle Was Written:

It was written to believers who were formerly Jews, since it includes expressions related to things concerning only the Jews, as in: (1:1), (2:6), (3:2), (3:9), (4:15), (6:12-18), (9:15), (13:11), (9:10), (9:13), (10:22), (10:28), (10:29), (12:18-22), (13:13).

It is suggested that the epistles is addressed to the Jews, who believed in the Lord, in Palestine and Eastern lands in general where they were exposed to the danger of straying off the orthodox faith and the loss of the blessings because of the great resistance and the immense persecution, to which they faced on the hands of the fanatic Jews who held onto the Mosaic Law, the covenant of the OT and the Leviticus priesthood.

Purpose of Writing the Epistle:

When the Christians, from Jewish roots, were expelled from the temple and were banned from Leviticus priesthood, they became like their crucified Master outside the camp. Therefore, the apostle revealed to them of Christ's excellence and the superiority of His service when compared to the Mosaic service and the glories of the Old Testament.

He stressed that they had crossed from the symbol to the Truth and from the shadow to heavenliness. As the four gospels explain the Lord's life here on earth during His incarnation, this epistle, which some consider as the fifth gospel, reveal His work in heaven for its topic is the "Christ's heavenly priesthood."

Time and Place of the Epistle Writing:

It was written in Italy by Timothy and more than likely after St Paul's release from his first imprisonment in Rome (63 or 64 AD). Another opinion (Holy Bible Dictionary) says that it was written between 65-68 AD

The Epistle Uniqueness:

The epistle has an important status among the New Testament books and in no way is it less importance than the rest of St Paul's epistles. Furthermore, it has a unique style not just in its way of writing, but also in the topics it discusses. For it is a distinctive epistle seeking to confirm the Christian faith and to the revealing of the superiority of the Christian teachings and their brilliance if compared to the Old Testament teachings.

The writer does understand the depth of the Christian faith and its value, and the true religion according to him is that which enters the person into a strong relationship with God. And this is the reason for which Judaism, with all its rituals and systems, does not suffice for it put man at a far distance from God and forbids him to enter into the Holy of Holies. This shortage in the Judaic worship was perfected through the Christian religion, which in the writer's view is a better and a perfect religion. Consequently, the writer shows the superiority of the Christian religion and its perfection in a comparison between it and Judaism and the Leviticus priesthood. This will be clear when we consider the epistle contents:

First Section (Chapter 1 – Chapter 10:18):

It discusses the superiority of the New Testament and the writer clarifies this comparing it to the Old Testament in the following:

- Comparison between the mediators of the two testaments:
The Jews were proud that the mediators of the Old Testament and the Mosaic Law were the angels. The writer does not object this fact but instead ascertains:
 - Christ is greater and is above the angels:
"Having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"? But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." (4-6)
 - Christ is greater than Moses:
"Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end." (3:1-6)
 - Christ is greater than Joshua:

“For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.” (4:8-11)

- Comparison between the Judaic and the Christian Worship:

- Superiority of the Christian priesthood over the Leviticus one (Christ is greater than Aaron):

Christ is a great High Priest (4:14) and a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (5:6). *“Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.”* (7:11-12)

- Characteristics of Christ’s Priesthood:

1. With an oath (7:20-21)
2. Unceasing and unchangeable (7:23-25)
3. Without any weaknesses (7:26-28)
4. *“For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.”* (7:28)

- Melchizedek:

He was a symbol to Christ who came a High Priest according to his order:

1. Name = King of righteousness
2. Vocation = King of peace
3. Without parents = No known roots and so is Christ has no human father and was not born of a human mother with regards to His divinity.
4. Melchizedek’s sacrifice was of bread and wine (sacrifice without blood)
5. Melchizedek was a priest, king and prophet
6. Abraham gave Melchizedek the tithes
7. Melchizedek blessed Abraham, without struggle (the younger blesses the older)

Thus the Leviticus priesthood that received the tithes, gave the tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham. In the same way, the Christian priesthood according to Melchizedek’s order is with no comparison to the Leviticus priesthood.

- Superiority of the Christian covenant over that of the Old Testament (8:7-13):

“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the

house of Judah not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."

- Better Dwelling (Chapter 9):
“But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” (9:11-12)
- Better Sacrifice (Chapter 10):
“And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” (10:11-14)

Second Section (10:19 – 13:25) In it the apostle offers moral advice:

- Steadfastness and Holding on to the faith:
“*let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.*” (10:11-14)
- Explicit meaning to faith and the mention of models of faith from the Old Testament:
 1. Meaning: “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*” (11:1)
 2. Importance of Faith: “*But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*” (11:6)
- Spiritual Strife (Chapter 12):
 1. Strife and the cloud of witnesses (12:1)
 2. Strife and reflection Jesus’ sufferings (12:2-3)
 3. Strife to the end (12:4)
 4. Acceptance of the Divine chastening (12:5-11)
 5. Supporting others in their strife (12:12-17)

6. Comparison between the Law and the new heaven
(12:18-29)

- Final Commandments (Chapter 13):
 1. Love and hospitality of strangers (13:1-3)
 2. Special advice for wedlock (13:4)
 3. Giving up the love of mammon (13:5-6)
 4. Remembrance of spiritual leaders (13:7)
 5. Fleeing heresies (13:8-11)
 6. Suffering with Christ (13:12-14)
 7. Praising (13:15-16)
 8. Submission to the rulers (13:17)

The Ending:

In this section, St Paul asks the believers to pray for him and to listen to bear the exhortation and reminds them of his prayers for their sake. He tells them the good news of Timothy's release and present the greetings to all the saints, rulers and send them the greetings of all those in Italy.

Important Observations:

1. Christ is both God and man:
In both chapters one and two, St Paul proves the divinity and humanity of our Lord. For, he portrays Christ as a high priest knowing our needs as He is a perfect man, and also is able to meet all of our needs because He is a perfect God.
2. The whole epistle focuses on the never ending priesthood of Christ and His sacrifice for sin:
St Paul explains in detail the importance of Christ's blood and His authority in obtaining eternal salvation, in the purification of the conscious, and in the opening of the heavenly abode, for anything that Christ touches is made eternal.
3. There are certain words that are repeated:
Perfect – once – blood – without – better – for we have.