

## Paul, His Travels and His Letters

Who Was Paul?

### Social and Political Background

Born in Tarsus, raised in Jerusalem

What place had the major influence?

Jerusalem, or Tarsus?

Tarsus. A major Greek and Roman cultural center  
Hellenized after Alexander  
Antiochus renamed it Antiocha on the Cydnus  
Annexed to Roman empire by Pompey  
Center of Roman culture  
Had a major university

Large Jewish community, remnant of Babylonian Captivity.  
Possibly Assyrian captivity as well.

Jerusalem.

Paul was a disciple of Gamliel Grandson of Hillel  
Likely lived in Jerusalem for much of his life.  
Possibly became a disciple in mid teens?

## Paul. Hellenist or Judean?

Modern assumptions:

Hellenistic and Judean Judaism seen as incompatible

Hellenistic. Modern, changing with society, “liberal”

Judean Judaism. Seen as anachronistic, “legalistic”, backwards

But was Paul in this “either/or” camp?

Probably not.

## Theological Perspectives on Paul

Nicene Fathers:

Constantine, Eusebius

Jews, murderous parricides, have nothing to do with Jewish Practice, Law, or social activities. Nicene Council Letter details the ruling that set Easter as a replacement for Passover

Post Nicene:

Augustine, Jerome. One cannot do Jewish things for any reason and still go to heaven.

Christianity was totally divorced from Judaism in practice, theology, philosophy.

Crusades and Inquisition. Very Anti-Jewish in pretty much all ways.

Lutheran Perspective:

Paul a former Jew.

Opposed to James. James the Judaizing circumcision faction

Paul the Hellenistic anti-Jewish practice Greek.

Stephen was Hellenized and not even Jewish (cf. *The Robe* zb.)

## **New Perspective on Paul 1960s until the present**

Sanders, Dunn, Wright.

Paul remained Jewish (shades of Augustine)

Judaism was called a Covenantal Nomism. Not a works based merit system  
Faith and Grace very similar to Pauline Christianity

Paul removed the “boundary markers” (the Nomos, covenantal laws) that made  
Judaism unique  
Judaism no longer relevant to the world. Christianity now “in”  
(shades of Augustine)

Historical-Critical Method

Assumptions: The supernatural not real

Most writing about Yeshua is added as later legend

Some of Paul's writings not genuine

Authors look to 'history' to find the real truth which may not lie in  
the Bible

## Acts and its Historical Reliability

Acts presents Paul as quite Jewish, Jewish friendly

Epistles do not speak of these events directly

Usually interpreted as Hellenistic, or Jewish unfriendly

Acts and Epistles placed in contradistinction to one another

Modern views: Acts not reliably historical.

Knox: 1950s scholar.

Acts not to be used as a theological base

Luke was exaggerating, not entirely honest in presenting Paul

Paul was too Jewish in Acts

In Epistles, he is understood as formerly Jewish, or opposed to the continuation  
Of distinctly Jewish practice for any believers.

Luke and Galatians opposed to one another

Prominent Author: Cannot imagine that Paul would ever encourage Jewish practices  
In Corinth.

Hanegraaf: First, in remembrance of the resurrection the early Christian church changed  
the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. Within weeks, thousands of Jews willingly  
gave up a theological tradition that had given them their national identity.

## Jewish Community in the Roman Empire

### Common assumptions

Jews within weeks turned from Judaism to Churches

Hanegraaf: Thousands within weeks gladly gave up Judaism for Sunday  
D.A. Carson. Sunday was the norm within weeks

Witherington. Maybe one in ten thousand Jews in Christianity by 70 CE

### Contrary data:

Akiva: 130 or so. Large numbers of Messianic disciples.

Perhaps a majority of Jerusalem Messianic just before destruction of Temple

So many defections in 66 and in 135 from Jewish army due to Messianic belief.

Both wars lost because of Messianic defections (in traditional Jewish texts).

Reading ancient documents today is similar to print media today.

Opponents given short shrift, but really a large movement

Writing about Messianics similar in early Christian and Jewish writings.

The leaders had much to say about the dangers of the Messianics.

Since the Messianics writings did not survive, it is often assumed they were gone.

## **Jewish Community in Roman Empire Continued**

The Jewish community had spread throughout the Roman Empire in the first century

Even in Acts we have Jewish communities in practically every place Paul travelled

Corinth had a synagogue. Rome had a huge Jewish community.

Galatia had a thriving Jewish community in Paul's day.

Ephesus, and most other places had well-known Jewish communities

In the Diaspora, Many Jewish communities had large Gentile populations

In some cases the Gentiles were a majority, in the synagogue even.

Diaspora and Judean Judaism had different attitudes towards Gentiles. Or perhaps the Gospels did not intend to paint a clear picture of the Jew-Gentile relationships. Or it is possible that the Saduccees and Pharisees are not accurately represented in the popular mythology surrounding them.

## Paul and His Travels

Jewish community in Roman Empire was ubiquitous

Paul traveled pretty much only to known Jewish settlements

Was it deliberate? Or was there no civilization where Jews were not living?

Overlay of maps of Jewish community and Paul's travels.

Paul's travels in all of his journeys almost exactly coincide with the known Jewish world in that century. Even his desire to go to Hispania was coincident with a Jewish community there.

The vast majority of Paul's dealings with Gentiles was in synagogues. The few times that he spoke to Gentiles outside of any overt Jewish connection, it was 'accidental' or he was compelled by circumstance, as in Ephesus and in Athens. His desire to go to Spain was due to Messiah not being known there, not that there was no Jewish community there.

## Significant Jewish Settlements in Roman Empire





