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Journeys of Paul

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Introduction

The Book of Acts describes three missionary journeys of the apostle Paul and one journey from Caesarea to Rome for a trial before Caesar, cumulatively encompassing the dates approximately from AD 48 to 60. Scholars believe Paul walked on foot when traveling over land and, based on records of early travelers in the Roman Empire, Paul probably averaged twenty miles a day¹ or perhaps twenty-five miles a day in ideal conditions, but certainly not when climbing mountains.² Often the traveling Roman military forced those who lived beside the main roads of the empire to offer hospitality or animals; therefore, Paul probably could not count on the benevolence of free hospitality as he traveled but had to pay for food and lodging, perhaps at an inn, thereby necessitating that he earn money as a tentmaker as he traveled.³ Paul surely traveled through rough and rocky terrain, and he possibly encountered threats of thieves and wild animals. Voyages by sea were dangerous especially during particular times of the year, and shipwrecks were frequent, just as Paul was involved in three shipwrecks.⁴ Scott Bessenecker calls Paul a “short-term missionary par excellence,” for he successfully led “missionary teams from place to place, seeking to proclaim the gospel along the way,” and raised up churches along the way, often seeing churches develop after just a two-month stay.⁵ Although current consensus is that “early Pauline house churches were necessarily small or that they were private,”⁶ David L. Balch argues that while many Christian assemblies were small, archaeological evidence shows

¹ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Traveling Conditions in the First Century: On the Road and on the Sea with St Paul," *Bible Review* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 40.

² *Ibid.*, 42.

³ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴ 2 Cor. 11:25.

⁵ Scott Bessenecker, "Paul's Short-term Church Planting: Can it Happen Again?" *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (July 1997): 327.

⁶ David L. Balch, "Rich Pompeiian Houses, Shops for Rent, and the Huge Apartment Building in Herculaneum as Typical Spaces for Pauline House Churches," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27, no. 1 (September 2004): 30.

that *domus* (private family houses) in Pompeii and Herculaneum could accommodate more than forty people for a Christian assembly.⁷ Small house churches developed where Paul traveled and visited.

Much of Paul's journeys passed through modern day Israel, Cyprus, Turkey, Syria, Greece, and Italy. From a tourist perspective, "Turkey is second only to Israel in the number of biblical sites it offers to Christian pilgrims."⁸ In addition to Paul's travels through Turkey, Paul's birthplace was in Tarsus, the seven churches of Revelation were located in cities of Turkey, and many believe Noah's Ark landed on Mount Ararat, which thus commands pride among mountains in Turkey. Additionally, Paul spent much time in three bases: Antioch of Syria, Corinth, and Ephesus.

Although Paul's missionary journeys took him northwest and west of Jerusalem into the Mediterranean world of the Roman Empire, Richard Bauckham builds a case that Paul's initial intent was to journey from Damascus toward the east into Mesopotamia to preach to the descendants of the original Jewish exiles of the northern and southern tribes of Israel.⁹ From these communities containing synagogues, Paul could reach out to Gentile areas. Instead of preaching in Greek as he did in the west, Paul probably would have preached in Aramaic in the synagogues in the east.¹⁰ Bauckham believes Paul's plans to travel east were thwarted when he returned to Damascus from Arabia or Nabatea¹¹ and had to preserve his life by fleeing the city¹² on a safe road toward Jerusalem since the Nabatean ethnarch in Damascus was pursuing Paul's arrest. The Nabateans controlled the trade routes to the south and northeast of Damascus. Once

⁷ Balch, 41.

⁸ Wendy Murray Zoba, "In Search of the Lost Churches of Paul: Turkey is Inviting Christians to Discover its Biblical Legacy," *Christianity Today* 42, no. 9 (August 10, 1998): 45.

⁹ Richard Bauckham, "What if Paul had Travelled East rather than West?" *Biblical Interpretation* 8, no. 1-2 (2000): 171-76.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 178.

¹¹ Gal. 1:17-18.

¹² 2 Cor. 11:32-33.

in Jerusalem, under divine providence, Paul rethought the geographical direction of his ministry, according to Bauckham.¹³

The traditional way to describe Paul's missionary journeys is to divide them in the book of Acts into three trips as follows: chapters 13-14, 15:36-18:22, and 18:23-21:16. Donald Rowlingson proposes an alternative way to divide the missionary journeys, for he opposes the traditional division between the second and third journeys:

To speak of Paul's missionary work in Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia as being comprised of a "second" and a "third" journey is to do justice to the fact that Paul twice traveled from Syria through Asia Minor to the Aegean Sea, but it greatly distorts Paul's perspective at the time and implies that the ministry about the Aegean was not an essentially unified piece of work.¹⁴

Moreover, Rowlingson sees the purpose for the second visit to Syrian Antioch as different from the first visit. For the first visit, Paul concluded his first missionary journey and reported to his sponsors, but the second visit was simply a "passing through on his way to complete what he had previously begun" as opposed to a return to "home base."¹⁵ Rowlingson prefers J. Weiss' terminology to describe Paul's journeys as "first period" and "second period," equating to the first period with the first traditional journey and the second period with all other journeys and activities after it.¹⁶ However, Rowlingson faults this classification by saying that the second period does not properly distinguish a Roman ministry from the Aegean ministry. Paul wrote to the Romans at the close of his Aegean Ministry saying that his activity in that region was closed¹⁷ and desired to minister in Rome.¹⁸ Furthermore, while he was in Ephesus he had in his

¹³ Bauckham, 177.

¹⁴ Donald T. Rowlingson, "The Geographical Orientation of Paul's Missionary Interests," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 69, no. 4 (December 1950): 341.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 343.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 341.

¹⁷ Rom. 15:23.

¹⁸ Rom. 15:22-28.

heart to go and minister in Rome¹⁹ after going to Jerusalem; though, once in Jerusalem, his plans took a slight turn in how he got to Rome.²⁰ Thus, Rowlingson favors three periods of missionary activity using a geographical orientation based on Paul's interest and intent: "(1) The Antiochian or Eastern Mediterranean Ministry in Acts 13-14, and inclusive as well of all else that Paul did before 15:36; (2) The Aegean Ministry in Acts 15:36-20:38; (3) The Roman Ministry in Acts 21-28."²¹

To reconstruct Paul's missionary journeys, Thomas H. Campbell states that the primary sources are Paul's letters, whereas the book of Acts is "at best" a secondary source except when Luke writes as an eyewitness or uses an eyewitness's journal.²² J. M. Gilchrist questions whether the "we-sections" in Acts are actual first-person narratives, and thus he prefers to stick with the primary sources of Paul's letters for his arguments, though he does state that the "we-sections" would be of equal value if they were eyewitness accounts.²³ Based on autobiographical sections in Paul's letter to the Galatians,²⁴ Paul journeyed to the following locations in order: Damascus, Arabia, Damascus, Jerusalem, Syria and Cilicia, Jerusalem, and Antioch.²⁵ Based on references in Paul's letters during his second phase,²⁶ Paul journeyed to the following cities in order: Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth.²⁷ Based on other references in Paul's letters dealing with a special contribution for the poor of Jerusalem during his third phase,²⁸ Paul journeyed or intended to journey to the following areas from Ephesus in order: Troas, Macedonia, Corinth

¹⁹ Acts 19:21.

²⁰ Rowlingson, 344.

²¹ Ibid., 342.

²² Thomas H. Campbell, "Paul's 'Missionary Journeys' as Reflected in His Letters," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 74, no. 2 (June 1955): 81.

²³ J. M. Gilchrist, "Paul and the Corinthians - The Sequence of Letters and Visits," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 34 (October 1988): 64n1.

²⁴ Galatians 1:17; 1:18; 1:21; 2:1; and 2:11.

²⁵ Thomas H. Campbell, 81-82.

²⁶ 1 Thess. 2:1-2; Phil. 4:15-16; 1 Thess. 2:17-18, 3:1-3; and 2 Cor. 11:7-9.

²⁷ Thomas H. Campbell, 82-83.

²⁸ 1 Cor. 16:8; 2 Cor. 2:12-13, 9:4; and Rom. 15:25-27.

(intended and did), Jerusalem (intended and did), and Rome (intended and did).²⁹ Thomas H. Campbell observes, “The general outline of Paul’s missionary career as found in Acts is essentially in harmony with that which may be derived from his letters.”³⁰ He does note some differences between the two, such as mentioning some destinations and events in one source that the other source omits, but reasonable people expect this “from two reliable, but independent sources.”³¹

This paper will primarily trace Paul’s three missionary journeys and his journey to Rome using the narration of Acts as a guide. Initially, the paper presents some of Paul’s missionary methods and strategies, for Paul traveled to major cities and was a great missionary; Paul was called primarily to Gentiles, yet he reached out first to the Jews and then to the Greeks. Paul’s first missionary journey focuses on the island of Cyprus and the region of Galatia. Paul’s second missionary journey focuses on Asia and Europe, spending much time in Corinth. Paul’s third missionary journey focuses on Ephesus in Asia, yet he always liked following up on churches he had previously established, such as in Galatia and Europe. Paul’s final journey recorded in Acts focuses on his sea voyage to Rome, with a disastrous shipwreck prior to reaching Italy.

Paul’s Missionary Methods and Strategies

Paul used several methods to propagate the Christian faith as a missionary. According to Theodore Gerald Soares, Paul had a plan to evangelize the Roman world of the Mediterranean, and thus he left for others the three great centers of Judaism—Palestine, Alexandria, and Babylon—as well as the Britons, Gauls, Germans, and those in the farther parts of Asia.³²

²⁹ Thomas H. Campbell, 83-84.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 86.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Theodore Gerald Soares, “Paul’s Missionary Methods,” *The Biblical World* 34, no. 5 (Nov. 1909): 326.

Generally moving westward, Paul strategically evangelized the great metropolitan centers, with the thought that these dozen influential cities would evangelize the surrounding areas that were less populated.³³ Paul intended to evangelize Spain, but it is uncertain whether he ever made it. Paul strategically gathered more and more disciples who he could trust to act on his behalf in the work of evangelism such as Luke, Silas, Timothy, Titus, and Epaphroditus.³⁴ These competent “lieutenants,” who were very loyal and affectionate toward Paul, multiplied Paul’s evangelistic efforts and carried his work when he was in prison in Caesarea and Rome for four years.³⁵

Paul strategically established self-governing churches under older and abler men who could preserve the spiritual fruit and nurture its growth.³⁶ As the spiritual father of these churches, Paul felt a responsibility to oversee these churches by way of personal visit, sending a representative, or sending a letter.³⁷ To finance his missionary efforts, Paul worked during the day as a tentmaker and did not ask for contributions from his new converts, in order to remove any suspicion that he might be self-seeking.³⁸ In every city that Paul visited, he sought out a Jewish synagogue to begin his ministry, first to the Jews and to the God-fearing Gentiles in attendance who did not want to submit to the Jewish ritualistic requirements. The informal nature of the service allowed visitors such as Paul to deliver a message; though, after a few Sabbaths, most of the Jews often forced Paul out of the congregation, after which he formed a church with the remnant Jews who believed and the many welcoming Gentiles.³⁹ Summarizing Roland Allen’s view of Paul’s missionary objective, Henry Turlington says, “Paul’s basic objective was the establishment of indigenous churches with a ministry from among their own number and a

³³ Soares, 327.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 328.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 329.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 330.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 330-31.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 331-32.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 329.

complete spiritual authority on their own.”⁴⁰ Turlington says that the apostle’s work was to lay a foundation for the church, continue to care for the young church and provide edification, always emphasizing the spiritual bond of unity in Christ Jesus.⁴¹

Churches consisted of believing Jews and Gentiles, for Paul preached to both Jews and Gentiles. In reviewing a book by John Dominic Crossan and Johathan L. Reed entitled, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus’ Apostle Opposed Rome’s Empire with God’s Kingdom*, Paul Foster says that the author’s main hypothesis is that the apostle Paul only evangelized the Gentiles or God-fearers, not the Jews, when he visited the synagogues.⁴² In analyzing a door column of an ancient Jewish synagogue at Aphrodisias, Crossan and Reed noticed that one-third of the 126 donor names listed are categorically God-fearers, thus showing the eminence of God-fearers in synagogues. The authors combine this large presence of God-fearers with their belief that Paul, an apostle to the Gentiles, took seriously and literally his statement in Galatians 2:8-9 that he “should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised,” and thus Crossan and Reed conclude that Paul did not preach to Jews in the synagogues but only to God-fearers.⁴³ Although their hypothesis is interesting, their interpretation of archeological evidence and Scripture seems faulty, and the book of Acts is clear that Paul did preach to both Jews and God-fearers when he visited the synagogues, for he desired to give the Jews the first opportunity to respond to the good news. Furthermore, Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians in 9:20 says that he worked among Jews, and scholar I. Howard Marshall says that such a rigid exclusive mission to Jews or to Gentiles would be virtually impossible.⁴⁴ Soares says, “Paul is rightly called the Apostle of the

⁴⁰ Henry E. Turlington, "Paul's Missionary Practice," *Review & Expositor* 51, no. 2 (April 1954): 169.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 169-82.

⁴² Paul Foster, "Travelling with Paul and Undermining Rome," *Expository Times* 117, no. 5 (February 2006): 190.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian & Theologian* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1970), 184.

Gentiles,” even though he first offers the gospel to the Jews of a synagogue because his primary evangelistic efforts were among Gentiles in the great cities of the Graeco-Roman world. Paul would often tell the Jews of the city who rejected his message that he would now go to the Gentiles, which he did in that city, yet he continued to reach out first to the Jews of a city and then to the Gentiles even when he went to Rome as a prisoner.⁴⁵

Paul’s First Missionary Journey

The book of Acts narrates Paul’s first missionary journey in chapters 13 and 14. From March AD 48 to September AD 49, Paul traveled along the route of Antioch in Syria, Seleucia, Salamis on Cyprus, Paphos on Cyprus, Perga in Asia Minor, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and back to Lystra, Iconium, Antioch of Pisidia, and Antioch in Syria.

Paul’s first missionary journey begins in Antioch of Syria, where he spent some time building up the church at the request of Barnabas. The church at Antioch discerned that God wanted the church to send out Paul and Barnabas for missionary work to other predominantly Gentile lands. “At the outset of his mission to the Gentiles, Saul began to use his Roman name, Paul ([Acts] 13:9).”⁴⁶ Along with John Mark, Paul and Barnabas traveled by boat from Seleucia to Barnabas’s homeland of Cyprus, the third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. Merrill F. Unger believes they began their journey at the start of the navigational season, which begins in the first week of March, “since their destination was the 130-mile trip southwest to Salamis on the east coast of the island. Had they set out later the westerly winds which blow throughout spring and summer would have compelled them to resort to a circuitous course skirting the Cilician coast and then, with the aid of land breezes and ocean currents, to head south to the

⁴⁵ Soares, 329-30.

⁴⁶ R. Alan Culpepper, "Paul's Mission to the Gentile World: Acts 13-19," *Review & Expositor* 71, no. 4 (Fall 1974): 488.

north coast of the island.”⁴⁷ They landed on the east coast of the island at Salamis, the most populated city on the island. After preaching in Salamis, they traveled to the other side of the island to Paphos, the capital city, where the governor of the island, Sergius Paulus, became a Christian—Paul’s first convert.

Archeology affirms the account in Acts: A trail exists from Salamis to Paphos; Paul visited Paphos; and Sergius Paulus was “proconsul.” David W. J. Gill documents the evidence for a road between Salamis and Phaos in the form of Roman itineraries and in the form of datable milestones.⁴⁸ The route that Paul and Barnabas would have taken from Salamis to Paphos would have taken at least a week to traverse several key cities, including three that granted a special status of asylum.⁴⁹ Italian archeologists, led by Filippo Giudice, recently discovered a fragmentary marble plaque in an early Christian basilica from Paphos, in Cyprus, that has a first or second century inscription that appears to bear the name “Paul apostle.”⁵⁰ The author of Acts designates the title of Sergius Paulus as “proconsul.”⁵¹ Since Cyprus was an imperial province, many thought that the title should be “proprietor,” but it was discovered that Cyprus became a senatorial province in 22 BC, just prior to Paul’s arrival in the province, and thus the title of “proconsul” is an accurate title.⁵² In Acts 13:4-12, while with Sergius Paulus in Paphos, the apostle Paul confronts a Jewish magician and, according to R. Alan Culpepper, “it would not have been unusual for a Jewish magician to live at the court of a Roman official, since Jewish magic held a special fascination for many non-Jews in the first century.”⁵³

⁴⁷ Merrill F. Unger, "Archaeology and Paul's Tour of Cyprus," *Bibliotheca sacra* 117, no. 467 (July 1960): 229.

⁴⁸ David W. J. Gill, "Paul's Travels through Cyprus (Acts 13:4-12)," *Tyndale Bulletin* 46, no. 2 (1995): 220.

⁴⁹ Gill, 226.

⁵⁰ Judith Harris, "Putting Paul on the Map: Apostle's Name Found on Cyprus Inscription," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 26, no. 1 (January 2000): 14.

⁵¹ Acts 13:7.

⁵² Unger, 232-33.

⁵³ Culpepper, 488.

Next, they sailed north to the city of Perga in Pamphylia on the coast of Asia Minor, from which they traveled north into the province of Galatia about one hundred miles. While John Mark had difficulties and decided to return to Jerusalem, perhaps because “he was not willing to participate in Paul’s mission to the Gentiles,”⁵⁴ Paul and Barnabas continued forward to the major city of Antioch of Pisidia, covering approximately 150 miles over the Taurus Mountains with a steep climb to Antioch.⁵⁵ Some conjecture that Paul may have contracted Malaria in the low lands and thus he traveled to the city of Antioch that had a high altitude because the weather there was cooler and conducive for treating the illness.⁵⁶ Thus, it was because of “a bodily ailment” that Paul traveled there and preached the gospel to those in Antioch.⁵⁷

Since the Jewish synagogue in Antioch allowed visitors to deliver a message, Paul took the opportunity to preach upon his visit.⁵⁸ Many believed the message and converted, while others rejected it. After Paul preached during a second visit to the synagogue, the Jews reacted strongly against Paul and caused Paul and Barnabas to leave Antioch toward the cities of the valley: Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. While in Lystra, Paul preached his first sermon solely to Gentiles, and God used him to heal miraculously a cripple. As a result, the crowd cried out, “The gods have become like men and have come down to us,” and they called Paul, Hermes, since he was the chief speaker, and they called Barnabas, Zeus.⁵⁹ However, Rick Strelan believes the response of the crowd came about also, primarily, because they saw Paul’s particular stare⁶⁰ and heard him speak in a loud voice⁶¹ along with seeing him as a stranger and hearing his use of a

⁵⁴ Culpepper, 488.

⁵⁵ John R. W. Stott, "Following Paul in Turkey," *Christianity Today* 22 (July 21, 1978): 36.

⁵⁶ James L. Blevins, "Acts 13-19: The tale of Three Cities," *Review & Expositor* 87, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 439; Stott, 36.

⁵⁷ Gal. 4:13.

⁵⁸ Acts 13:16-41.

⁵⁹ Acts 14:11-13.

⁶⁰ Acts 14:9.

⁶¹ Acts 14:10.

divine command to “arise,” all of which were clues to the Lystrans that Paul was possessed by a divine spirit in his body.⁶²

Based on Paul’s ministry in southern Galatia, David F. Detwiler “explores the possibility that Acts 14:21-23 serves as an outline of—and brief commentary on—the discipleship process Jesus has called His followers to pursue in their own lives and to encourage in the lives of others.”⁶³ Detwiler sees four stages to the discipleship process based on this passage: making disciples, nurturing disciples, organizing disciples, and entrusting disciples to God’s care.⁶⁴ First, in verse 21, Paul and Barnabas preached the good news in the city of Derbe and made many disciples. Second, in verses 21-22, Paul and Barnabas returned to the cities where they had started churches (Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch) to strengthen and encourage the disciples. Although there was danger lurking in these cities from their first visit to them, an annual change of administrators may have occurred which eased the tension and allowed a possible revisit.⁶⁵ Third, “Paul’s goal was to plant churches that could provide ongoing nurture through qualified leaders,”⁶⁶ thus, Paul and Barnabas appointed spiritual elders within each church.⁶⁷ Fourth, Paul and Barnabas committed and entrusted the elders and the disciples in the church to God’s care as Paul and Barnabas left for their next destination.⁶⁸

Michael Winger believes that analyzing Galatians’ explicit and implicit references helps to discover aspects of Paul’s preaching in Galatia, and as a result, he believes Paul preached “Christ crucified” and condemned certain deeds as “works of flesh,” warning against other false

⁶² Rick Strelan, "Recognizing the Gods (Acts 14.8-10)," *New Testament Studies* 46, no. 4 (October 2000): 503.

⁶³ David F. Detwiler, "Paul's Approach to the Great Commission in Acts 14:21-23," *Bibliotheca sacra* 152, no. 605 (January 1995): 33.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 34-39.

⁶⁵ Richard N. Longnecker, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 12 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981): 9:438.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶⁷ Acts 14:23.

⁶⁸ Detwiler, 39.

teachings, and probably started a collection for the poor in Jerusalem.⁶⁹ While it is clear that Paul did take up such a collection as he mentions in 1 Cor. 16:1-4, 2 Cor. 8-9, and Rom. 15:25-32, it is noteworthy that David Downs has argued against the scholarly consensus that this collection is ever mentioned or alluded to in Acts, including Acts 11:27-30 and 24:17.⁷⁰ Paul and Barnabas had visited four Galatian cities, each of which were “proud Greek or Roman colonies in their heyday”:⁷¹ Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. Although Perga was where the missionaries landed on the way to Pisidian Antioch, the missionaries chose to travel by foot from Perga to Attalia to board a ship going back home, which has been confirmed as a very plausible and accurate landing and departing location by Douglas A. Campbell, who has assessed the local geography.⁷²

Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch of Syria and gave an enthusiastic report of what God had done among the Gentiles. Due to a controversy between Paul and some Jews from Jerusalem, the apostles and elders convened a conference in Jerusalem, which Paul attended. According to Blevins, “The Jerusalem conference . . . was designed to place the seal of apostolic approval on the gentile mission of Paul.”⁷³ The result was that “Paul would be free to evangelize the Gentiles without imposing circumcision upon them. The Gentiles, however, should observe that part of the law placed upon them by Leviticus 17-18: abstain from food offered to idols, unchastity, eating the meat of animals strangled, or drinking blood.”⁷⁴ These compromises would possibly enable Christian Gentiles to have fellowship with Jews in Jerusalem. R. Alan Culpepper

⁶⁹ Michael Winger, "Act One: Paul Arrives in Galatia," *New Testament Studies* 48, no. 4 (October 2002): 553.

⁷⁰ David J. Downs, "Paul's Collection and the Book of Acts Revisited," *New Testament Studies* 52, no. 1 (January 2006): 68.

⁷¹ Stott, 37.

⁷² Douglas A. Campbell, "Paul in Pamphylia (Acts 13.13-14a; 14.24b-26): A Critical Note," *New Testament Studies* 46, no. 4 (October 2000): 595-602.

⁷³ Blevins, 443.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

believes that the conference to settle whether or not Gentiles had to be circumcised (and follow the Law of Moses), in order to become Christians in Acts 15, “stands as a watershed in the book of Acts” and lays “the basis for later events.”⁷⁵ Because of the conference, further doors opened to bring uncircumcised Gentile Christians into full church membership.

Paul’s Second Missionary Journey

The book of Acts narrates Paul’s second missionary journey from 15:36 to 18:22. From AD 49 to 52 (or perhaps from April 50 to September 52), Paul traveled along the route of Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, Lystra, Phrygian and Galataian region, Mysia, Troas, Samothrace, Neapolis, Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Caesarea, and back to Antioch in Syria. Paul had traveled approximately 1,800 miles by land and 1,300 miles by sea.⁷⁶

Initially, Paul planned to team up with Barnabas again and revisit the churches they had started during the first missionary journey. However, Barnabas wanted to take his cousin Mark with them, but Paul saw him as a deserter and refused to take him. Their sharp disagreement led to Paul and Barnabas going separate ways. John W. Bailey sees a further reason for their split that he calls “the real cause of the division.”⁷⁷ Paul felt that Barnabas strayed away from the truth when he and Peter refused to eat with Gentiles in the presence of Jews.⁷⁸ According to Bailey, Paul did not want such an attitude on his team as he visited churches consisting of both Gentiles and Jews.⁷⁹ Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus while Paul took Silas from the church at

⁷⁵ Culpepper, 490.

⁷⁶ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, 41.

⁷⁷ John W. Bailey, “Paul’s Second Missionary Journey,” *The Biblical World* 33, no. 6 (June 1909): 414.

⁷⁸ Gal. 2:11.

⁷⁹ Bailey, 414.

Jerusalem along with him and they ventured north from Antioch to the region of Phrygia and Galatia, since the Holy Spirit forbade them to venture into Asia to preach.⁸⁰

While in Lystra, Paul and Silas met with young Timothy and permitted him to accompany them on their missionary journey. Although Timothy's father was a Gentile, his mother was a Jew, so Jews would consider Timothy to be a Jew but would be offended by him not being circumcised according to the Jewish law, so Paul insisted that Timothy first be circumcised to better reach the Jews with the gospel.

Acts 16:7-8 says they traveled opposite Mysia and were trying to journey into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them, but passing through Mysia they came down into Troas. The particular roads that Paul may have traveled from Galatia to Troas has been a mystery for many years, even up to 1979 when W. P. Bowers concluded that, during Paul's time, no significant east-west routes are known to have existed.⁸¹ However, Robert Jewett, writing in 1997, believes there is evidence that well-maintained roads existed during the Roman period on the route from Dorylaeum to Troas, a distance of approximately 250-280 miles.⁸² Many scholars believe that Dorylaeum is the point opposite Mysia where Paul decided to change directions,⁸³ upon the Holy Spirit forbidding him to travel into Bithynia. Jewett's research shows there were Roman cities, colonies and mining facilities along his proposed route, confirming that such a route existed.⁸⁴ The endpoint on the route, Troas, was a port city that connected international routes.

⁸⁰ Acts 16:6.

⁸¹ Robert Jewett, "Mapping the Route of Paul's 'Second Missionary Journey' from Dorylaeum to Troas," *Tyndale Bulletin* 48, no. 1 (1997): 1-2.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

The team traveled to Troas. People originally called the city of Troas by the name of Alexandria Troas to differentiate it from other cities named Alexandria, but they eventually used the simple name of Troas.⁸⁵ Paul saw a vision of a man calling Paul to help him in Macedonia. According to Culpepper, the guidance of the vision showed that “Paul was not traveling according to a planned itinerary. He worked where the Spirit led him.”⁸⁶ It matters little who the man in the vision was that Paul saw in Troas, but Luke’s intention in Acts is to express “that the vision created the conviction that Macedonia was divinely appointed to be the next field for evangelistic labor.”⁸⁷ Thus, the missionary party left Troas, sailed to the port of Neapolis in the province of Macedonia, and journeyed inland to Philippi.

The city of Troas had a good harbor that linked Asia with Europe via a sea route, thus enabling the strategic city to prosper during Roman times.⁸⁸ Paul and his missionary party sailed for a day from Troas, past the small island of Tenedos—famous in the Trojan War stories, to the island of Samothrace, known for its cult of the Cabiri.⁸⁹ The next day, they sailed to the port of Neapolis, which has a large bay protected by the island of Thasos.⁹⁰ In the city of Neapolis, meaning “new city” in Greek, archaeology has discovered coins, pottery, and other small objects showing evidence of Roman and Greek occupation and culture.⁹¹ From Neapolis, the missionaries traveled inland along the eight-mile road to Philippi, the main city in that area of Macedonia. King Philip, the father of Alexander the Great, established Philippi. About one hundred years before Paul’s journey in Philippi, the army of Antony and Octavian defeated the army of Brutus and Cassius to take control of the Roman Empire.

⁸⁵ William A. McDonald, "Archaeology and St. Paul's Journeys in Greek Lands," *Biblical Archaeologist* 3, no. 2 (May 1940): 18.

⁸⁶ Culpepper, 493.

⁸⁷ Bailey, 417.

⁸⁸ McDonald, "Archaeology and St. Paul's Journeys in Greek Lands," 19.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

In Philippi, Paul met with a small Jewish group just outside the gate at a place of prayer by a riverside, for it was customary for Jews to meet for prayer near water.⁹² Archaeology has found a great arched gateway and a river runs close to it, bordering the great Via Egnatia road, thus locating the probable place where Paul preached first in Europe.⁹³ Since there was no synagogue, the number of Jews was quite small. Among those of the Jewish faith who came to hear Paul, Lydia was one of the first converts and opened her home for Paul and his party, thus her home became the first Christian church in Europe. After a time of ministry, the owners of the slave girl, whom Paul had delivered of fortune telling demons, dragged the apostles before the magistrates in the market place, which lies between the basilica and the acropolis.⁹⁴ Archeology has uncovered the market place and “tribunal or platform, from which orators spoke to the crowds gathered in the forum and where magistrates dispensed justice.”⁹⁵ Bordering the forum was the city prison where the officials probably held the apostles.⁹⁶

While in Philippi, Paul and Silas perform an exorcism on a fortune-telling slave-girl, which causes her owners to become angry about their damaged property and the loss of their livelihood. Although officials charge Paul and Silas with disturbing the peace and introducing a foreign cult in Acts 16:19-21, Craig S. de Vos says, “The accusations do not appear to fit the action that elicited them.”⁹⁷ De Vos presents a case in his essay that the accusation involved the use of “magic” and “Luke deliberately tried to play down such a charge due to his own theological agenda.”⁹⁸ Many of today’s scholars say that people in antiquity did not clearly

⁹² Josephus Flavius, “The Antiquities of the Jews,” in *The Works of Josephus: New Updated Edition* (Peabody, Hendrickson, 1987): 14:10:23.

⁹³ McDonald, “Archaeology and St. Paul’s Journeys in Greek Lands,” 20.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 21.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Craig Steven de Vos, “Finding a Charge that Fits: The Accusation Against Paul and Silas at Philippi (Acts 16.19-21),” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* (June 1999): 56.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 56.

distinguish between magic and religion, and magic was generally illegal in the Roman Empire.⁹⁹ Thus, according to de Vos, the owners of the slave-girl perceive that Paul and Silas used magic in their exorcism and, from the owners' perspective, caused damage to their property and loss of their livelihood, so the owners took legal action against Paul and Silas for using magic in a harmful way.¹⁰⁰ Although de Vos makes a case that Luke does not tell the whole truth about the actual charges of practicing magic since he wants to suppress such a terrible conviction for Christians, this does not seem to be consistent with Luke's candidness as demonstrated in Luke's narration of people accusing Jesus of practicing magic in his exorcism in Luke 11:14-23. If Luke believed that the officials accused Paul and Silas primarily because of being magicians, then surely he would have stated so, but instead he says the officials charged them with disturbing the peace and introducing a foreign cult.

From Philippi, the missionaries traveled westward to the provincial capital, Thessalonica, along the Via Egnatia, with breaks at Amphipolis and Apollonia. Thessalonica was an important city and had a synagogue of Jews and proselytes. Thessalonica "is situated at the head of the largest gulf indenting the Balkan Peninsula, and since antiquity has been a vital link between the Mediterranean countries and those of central Europe."¹⁰¹ Both its sea route and its interior route by the Via Egnatia enabled commerce to flow and brought prosperity to Thessalonica.¹⁰² The founder of Thessalonica, Cassander of Macedonia, named the city after his wife--the sister of Alexander the Great.¹⁰³

While in Thessalonica, Paul preached and reasoned with the Jews in a synagogue, and Paul persuaded many God-fearing Greeks, some leading women, and some Jews, but many of

⁹⁹ De Vos, 56-57.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 62.

¹⁰¹ McDonald, "Archaeology and St. Paul's Journeys in Greek Lands," 22.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

the Jews became jealous and formed a mob that approached Jason's house looking for Paul and Silas.¹⁰⁴ The mob took Jason and accused him of welcoming the two strangers who "act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."¹⁰⁵ As an alternative to the two popular views of what the charges consisted of in Acts 17:6-9, Justin K. Hardin offers a third view. The traditional view is that the authorities accused Paul and Silas of treason, and a second more recent view says they violated imperial laws against predicting the change of a ruler by proclaiming Jesus as Messiah or King. Hardin reasons for a third view, "Both the charges and the seizure of payment in the judicial episode relate to imperial laws repressing Graeco-Roman voluntary associations."¹⁰⁶ In support of this view, Hardin says:

In a recently discovered municipal constitution in Spain, the *Lex Irnitania*, which dates to the Flavian period (69-96 CE), a chapter is devoted to voluntary associations. This section stated that all gathering, groups, and voluntary associations (*collegia*) were forbidden to meet, with the penalty for doing so being a monetary fine to the municipal authorities. . . . The free city of Thessalonica may have reflected similar penalties in their civic constitution.¹⁰⁷

In addition to this statute of the latter half of the first century, another extant constitution of a Roman colony, the *Lex Coloniae Genetivae Juliae*, shows the repression of these groups as early as 44 BC.¹⁰⁸ Thus, according to Hardin, the accusations and penalty came because of Jason and others breaking imperial laws against voluntary associations.¹⁰⁹ Henry Cadbury says that even more important than the charges to Luke is the verdict that the Romans render to the Roman citizens Paul and Silas: not guilty.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ Acts 17:4-6.

¹⁰⁵ Acts 17:7.

¹⁰⁶ Justin K. Hardin, "Decrees and Drachmas at Thessalonica: An Illegal Assembly in Jason's House (Acts 17.1-10a)," *New Testament Studies* 52, no. 1 (January 2006): 29.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹¹⁰ Henry J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1958): 309.

Next, the missionaries traveled about forty miles west of Thessalonica to Berea, where Paul found his most understanding hearers in the synagogue. From Berea, Paul sailed toward Athens without his companions, for they had remained in Thessalonica. According to Alan Meers, while the expression in Acts 17:4 is unclear regarding how Paul journeyed from Berea to Athens, Meers concludes that since they “passed by Thessaly,”¹¹¹ Paul must have traveled to the sea and boarded a boat, probably at Duim, and sailed to Athens,” passing Thessaly on the coast.¹¹² In Paul’s time, Athens had lost most of its ancient glory, but it was still famous for its four great philosophical schools. Athens became the strongest state in Greece in 479 BC, after two major wars with the Persians, and it flourished with great accomplishments in art, sculpture, and philosophy.¹¹³ The Greeks built many temples for the hundreds of Greek gods and goddesses, from Athena to Zeus, who carried Roman names after the Romans conquered Greece. The nostalgia of Athen’s glory days still loomed over those who came to the city in Paul’s day; however, the newer city of Corinth had replaced Athens as the most important city in Greece.¹¹⁴

Sailing into Athens, Paul probably docked his boat at Piraeus, which was the “busiest harbor of Greece both in classical and modern times.”¹¹⁵ The path from Piraeus harbor to Athens was five miles long and traversed northeast through Athens’s largest and finest cemetery, the Dipylon Cemetery, then through the “Dipylon” (double gate) on the west side of the city.¹¹⁶ Passing through the Dipylon, a long street leads eastward to the Agora, or market place, which was a large open rectangular space surrounded by public buildings having religious or civic

¹¹¹ Acts 17:15 in the Delta text.

¹¹² Alan Meers, "Who Went Where and How? A Consideration of Acts 17:14," *Bible Translator (Ap, O Practical Papers)* 44, no. 2 (April 1993): 203.

¹¹³ Blevins, 444.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ William A. McDonald, "Archaeology and St. Paul's Journeys in Greek Lands. II, Athens," *Biblical Archaeologist* 4, no. 1 (February 1941): 1.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

purpose.¹¹⁷ Paul preached in the synagogue and reasoned with people everyday in the agora.¹¹⁸ Having disputed daily with those who met with him in the Agora, Paul then went to the Areopagus, which was directly south of the Agora. People in the ancient world knew Athens for her intellectual supremacy and excellent university during Paul's time.¹¹⁹ With his good educational background, Paul probably appreciated this surrounding. The Areopagus was a small hill upon which the oldest political council of Athens met, usually in connection "with trials of homicide and other heinous crimes,"¹²⁰ but the Council of the Areopagus was also in charge of religious affairs and could summon Paul to hear his new religious ideas.¹²¹ Areopagus derives its name from "pagos" meaning "hill," and Ares, the Greek god of war.¹²² Acts says that Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill since Mars is the Roman name for Ares.

Some critics would say that Paul did not really expound his teaching before the Council of the Areopagus; instead, he only addressed the people in the Agora below to the north. Yet, as McDonald says, "there is no historical improbability in Paul's being summoned before the Council of the Areopagus to defend himself against charges of impiety."¹²³ Some critics say that Paul misquoted an inscription on some altar dedicated "to the unknown god" since archaeology has not discovered such an inscription. However, several other ancient literatures also mention an "unknown god."¹²⁴

"Athens was a thriving cultural marketplace" of "art, poetry, drama, and lively philosophical and religious conversation."¹²⁵ Thus, to Dunham, it is reasonable that Paul would

¹¹⁷ McDonald, "Archaeology and St. Paul's Journeys in Greek Lands. II, Athens," 3.

¹¹⁸ Acts 17:17.

¹¹⁹ McDonald, "Archaeology and St. Paul's Journeys in Greek Lands. II, Athens," 4.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 8.

¹²¹ Blevins, 445.

¹²² McDonald, "Archaeology and St. Paul's Journeys in Greek Lands. II, Athens," 8.

¹²³ Ibid., 9.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Robert E. Dunham, "Acts 17:16-34," *Interpretation* 60, no. 2 (April 2006): 202.

explore the city while waiting for Timothy and Silas to join him in Athens. Paul gave a religious speech at the Areopagus in hopes of changing their minds toward Christianity. However, because of the culture, he spoke in a special way. Almost four centuries earlier, Alexander the Great had Hellenized much of the known world and exported Greek culture to other lands, while also bringing back to Athens the best of what he saw in the other cultures. By the time that Paul addressed the Athenians, people had brought many foreign deities into the Hellenized world. Tolerance of foreign deities was a trademark in Athens and foreigners coming to Greece were welcomed in bringing their gods.¹²⁶ Since the city respected everyone's god, Paul's message was especially hard to swallow as he proclaimed a "creator-redeemer God who demanded sole loyalty."¹²⁷ However, he begins his speech in "the language and tone of the philosophers," as he compliments them on their religiosity, cites their poets, and draws on their insights, all without referencing the history of Israel, or the Scripture, or directly to Jesus,¹²⁸ for the philosophical audience is not familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures.¹²⁹ Although some theologians have denied that Paul could have spoken such a message since it contrasts his messages in his letters, F. F. Bruce says that the speech in Athens does resemble the points that Paul makes in the first three chapters of Romans and any contrasts are due to the different audiences: Christians in Rome, pagans in Athens.¹³⁰ Although Paul did not win many converts according to Acts, which only mentions Dionysius and Damaris, or establish any churches in Athens, he did plant the seeds of the gospel, even if no church arose during the apostolic age.¹³¹

¹²⁶ Dunham, 202.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 203.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Blevins, 445.

¹³⁰ F. F. Bruce, "Paul and the Athenians," *Expository Times* 88, no. 1 (October 1976): 11.

¹³¹ Ibid., 12.

After visiting Athens, Paul traveled to Corinth around AD 51 and stayed for eighteen months to teach the Word of God.¹³² Since “Corinth was the commercial and political center of the Roman province of Achaia,” therefore Paul probably saw the city as a strategic place from which to spread the gospel.¹³³ Paul became friends with Aquila and Priscilla from Rome who were also Jews and tentmakers, like Paul.¹³⁴ Their shop was probably like most ancient shops—simple rooms that opened “directly on the street or on a courtyard close to the street.”¹³⁵ Culpepper is correct in saying that Luke’s account of Paul in Corinth “provides the pegs on which most chronologies of Paul’s life hang” since the account mentions two items for which there is a consensus of dating. Scholars know that the edict of Claudius occurred in AD 49 and Gallio’s term occurred from AD 51-52, based on an inscription found at Delphi, Greece.¹³⁶ Therefore, Paul arrived in Corinth sometime in AD 50.

Paul traveled east from Corinth, with Priscilla and Aquila, and crossed the Aegean Sea to Ephesus.¹³⁷ In Ephesus, Paul reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue for a few days and then proceeded on toward Caesarea, while leaving Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus. From Caesarea, Paul returned to Antioch of Syria, which probably demarked the end of his second missionary journey. Paul accomplished much during his three-year missionary journey, whereby he had traversed about three thousand miles. He had strengthened the churches in the provinces of Syria-Cilicia and Galatia, and he had evangelized the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia. His

¹³² Acts 18:1, 11.

¹³³ William A. McDonald, "Archaeology and St. Paul's Journeys in Greek Lands. III, Corinth," *Biblical Archaeologist* 5, no. 3 (September 1942): 36.

¹³⁴ Acts 18:2-3.

¹³⁵ McDonald, "Archaeology and St. Paul's Journeys in Greek Lands. III, Corinth," 39-40.

¹³⁶ Culpepper, 495-96.

¹³⁷ Acts 18:8.

desire to reach the imperial city seemed one-step closer as he had “planted the gospel in the fertile soil of Europe.”¹³⁸

Paul’s Third Missionary Journey

The book of Acts narrates Paul’s third missionary journey from 18:23 to 21:14. From AD 53 to 57, Paul traveled along the route of Antioch of Syria, Galatian region, Phrygia, Ephesus, Troas, Philippi, Troas, Assos, Mitylene, Chios, Samos, Miletus, Cos, Rhodes, Patara, Tyre of Syria, Ptolemais, and Caesarea. Paul begins his third missionary journey by leaving Antioch and revisiting the churches he had planted in the regions of Galatia and Phrygia. Next, he returns to Ephesus and spends two years teaching and preaching in the city.¹³⁹

The environments of big cities where evangelism started, such as Ephesus, which had over a quarter million people and controlled important land and sea routes,¹⁴⁰ greatly influenced Christianity as it began and spread and Christianity influenced these big cities too.¹⁴¹ Located two miles from the sea, Ephesus was the capital of magic and astrology for the ancient world. As Paul spent time in Ephesus, local magicians observed Paul as he exorcised evil spirits. They eventually burned all their magic books in repentance. “Moreover, Paul’s preaching caused a reduction in the sale of idols of Artemis to pilgrims visiting the temple of Artemis (Diana).”¹⁴²

The great Temple of Artemis (Diana) resided in Ephesus and was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. For centuries only documents from ancient writers testified of this temple, but toward the end of the nineteenth century, John T. Wood discovered the large platform for the Temple of Artemis and thus discovered the exact location of the temple as being

¹³⁸ Bailey, 423.

¹³⁹ Acts 19:10.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas V. Brisco, *Holman Bible Atlas* (Nashville: Holman, 1998): 249

¹⁴¹ Merrill Mead Parvis, "Archaeology and St. Paul's Journeys in Greek Lands. IV, Ephesus," *Biblical Archaeologist* 8, no. 3 (September 1945): 73.

¹⁴² Brisco, 250.

“northeast of the city at the foot of the Hill of Ayassoluk.”¹⁴³ Furthermore, discoveries of other features of the temple show that the temple was well decorated and a magnificent structure, having one hundred columns with a diameter of six feet at the base.¹⁴⁴ Scholars believe that a statue of the goddess stood behind the altar and was probably a large meteorite from Jupiter,¹⁴⁵ sculptured by an artist to resemble a human figure.¹⁴⁶

Since a main business of Ephesus was the selling of silver statues of the goddess to visitors going to the shrine, when Paul had preached against idolatry for two years with noticeable results, the silversmiths’ business was in jeopardy and they started a riot against Paul and carried the riot into the big amphitheater. In the third century BC, the Greeks built this theater, the largest theater in the Greek world, which people prominently saw as they sailed into the harbor of Ephesus.¹⁴⁷ John Woods discovered the ruins of this theater in the late nineteenth century.¹⁴⁸ The Great Theater, having a diameter of about 495 feet and potentially holding about 24,500 people, was located in the city on the western slope of Mount Pion, where a mob screamed to Paul for two hours, according to Acts 19:34, saying, “Great is Diana [Artemis] of the Ephesians.”¹⁴⁹ The people considered Artemis the goddess of fertility and wild nature, and worship at the sanctuary included fertility rites.¹⁵⁰ According to Blevins, “Ephesus during Roman rule became the worship center for Asia Minor.”¹⁵¹

Paul chose to stay in Ephesus for over two years, after arriving in Ephesus in the summer of AD 54. He taught and argued in the Jewish synagogue for about three months, then the Jews

¹⁴³ Parvis, 67.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 68.

¹⁴⁵ Acts 19:35.

¹⁴⁶ Parvis, 68.

¹⁴⁷ Blevins, 447.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Parvis, 68.

¹⁵⁰ Blevins, 446.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 447.

forced him to leave and he found a rentable philosophical lecture hall, called Tyrannus, where he could continue his preaching to those interested. Paul worked as a tentmaker in the morning and then taught and preached the gospel from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., during the hottest part of the day when most businesses closed for a siesta.¹⁵²

Although Acts 19:23-41 records the riot caused by Demetrius the silversmith, Roy Yates believes that the Epistles show that Paul encountered other troubles at Ephesus that were more serious and more numerous,¹⁵³ including affliction caused by Jewish opposition.¹⁵⁴ After the riot, Paul left Ephesus and revisited the churches he founded on the second missionary journey, exhorting congregations in Greece and Macedonia for three months.¹⁵⁵ Paul then sails from Philippi to Troas and then past Ephesus in hopes of getting to Jerusalem in time for the day of Pentecost, though he does greet some of the brethren in the region of Ephesus as he lands temporarily at Miletus.

Paul gives a farewell address to the elders of the church of Ephesus and others who gathered to join Paul in Miletus in Acts 20:17-38. Conscious that this probably is the last time he is ever in Asia and realizing that the Jews and Romans may arrest and imprison him as he goes to Jerusalem, Paul gives an emotional farewell speech that contains elements that was common for similar farewell discourses of that period.¹⁵⁶ Recent commentators believe that Luke composed the speech and that Paul did not actually say this speech, though the thought is surely Pauline.¹⁵⁷ However, in addition to Marshall, other scholars such as Bruce, Williams and Neil, believe that

¹⁵² Blevins, 448.

¹⁵³ Roy Yates, "Paul's Affliction in Asia: 2 Corinthians 1:8," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 53 (October 1981): 241.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 243.

¹⁵⁵ Acts 20:1-3.

¹⁵⁶ I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. in *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 328-29.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 329.

“the denial of a Pauline basis for this address is unwarranted,”¹⁵⁸ for Paul is very capable of using his life as an example to the leaders.¹⁵⁹ Bruce notes how this is the only Pauline speech that Luke records that is delivered to Christians, and thus it has many similarities to Paul’s letters that are also addressed to Christians, especially Paul’s later letters.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, even though Luke writes the speech, and all speeches, using Luke’s own style, it is plausible that the speech originated with Paul who was very concerned for the Christians whom he had labored among.

The Apostle Paul sailed to the Island of Rhodes towards the end of his third missionary journey, according to Acts 21:1, and thus may have stopped there to preach—as asserted by a tradition on the island. The recent tradition, however, elaborates an unfounded story that Paul preached the gospel and many islanders responded positively, after which he appointed Prochorus as bishop of the island, and later he wrote to the Christians of the island (supposedly called “Colossians” of the Colossian Church because of the Colossus of Rhodes) a letter called the Epistle to the Colossians.¹⁶¹ However, only during the Middle Ages does evidence show that people sometimes called the island of Rhodes, “Colossus,” in remembrance of the Helios-Colossus, one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world, and thus people called inhabitants of the island of Rhodes, “Colossenses.”¹⁶² Yet, according to Otto Meinardus, the tradition of Paul’s success on the island probably originated in the eighteenth or nineteenth century and the consensus among scholars is that the destination of the Colossian letter was the town of Colossae in Phrygia, located on the Lycus River, just east of Laodicea.¹⁶³ Paul ends his third missionary

¹⁵⁸ Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 329-330.

¹⁵⁹ 1 Cor. 11:1.

¹⁶⁰ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, rev. ed., vol. in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. by Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 387.

¹⁶¹ Otto F. A. Meinardus, "Colossus, Colossae, Colossi: Confusio Colossaea," *Biblical Archaeologist* 36, no. 1 (February 1973): 33-34.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 34.

journey by returning to Caesarea, after which he travels to Jerusalem for the Jewish day of Pentecost.

Paul's Journey to Rome

Although Paul's journey to Rome in Italy does not really begin until the narration of Acts 27:1 – 28:14, Harold S. Songer observes that, in one sense, the fateful journey to Rome begins with Paul's departure from Ephesus in Acts 20:1.¹⁶⁴ For it is in Ephesus that Paul senses God's will and proclaims from Ephesus in Acts 19:21 that he must visit Jerusalem and then must see Rome. Songer acknowledges that the riot of Ephesus was also a factor in Paul leaving Ephesus and that Jewish opposition followed him¹⁶⁵ and eventually led to some false accusations by Jews from Asia that led to his arrest¹⁶⁶ and imprisonment in Caesarea. Upon appealing to Caesar, Paul travels from Caesarea to Malta in Acts 27:1-44, then Luke describes his experiences on the island in Acts 28:1-10, then Paul travels from Malta to Puteoli to Rome in Acts 28:11-14, all of which occurred from AD 59 to 60.

The final we-passage involves a voyage from Caesarea to Rome, with a shipwreck on an island prior to the destination of the mainland of Italy. Susan Marie Praeder says, "The literary relation of 27:1-28:16 to sea voyages in ancient literature is seen in its travelogues, forecast, storm, speech, and concern for safety," and thus Luke is apparently familiar with various literary styles used in ancient sea voyage literature.¹⁶⁷ While the shipwreck of Acts does include allusions to the shipwreck of the fictional character Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey* Books 5 and

¹⁶⁴ Harold S. Songer, "Paul's Mission to Jerusalem: Acts 20-28," *Review & Expositor* 71, no. 4 (Fall 1974): 499.

¹⁶⁵ Harold S. Songer, "Acts 20-28: From Ephesus to Rome," *Review & Expositor* 87, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 451.

¹⁶⁶ Acts 21:27-33.

¹⁶⁷ Susan Marie Praeder, "Acts 27:1-28:16: Sea Voyages in Ancient Literature and the Theology of Luke-Acts," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (October 1984): 705.

12, as demonstrated by Dennis R. MacDonald,¹⁶⁸ this does not force one to conclude that the author of Acts also made up his story and used the Odysseus tale as a model. J. M. Gilchrist believes in the historicity of the shipwreck and that the final we-passage is an eyewitness account of a participant on that ship, but the author probably wrote the shipwreck narrative years after the event, “when the passing years had added reflection, glamour and sedation to the writer’s traumatic memories.”¹⁶⁹ Further, Gilchrist believes that the data and archeology show that Paul’s ship probably “grounded just north of the strait between St Paul’s Islands and the mainland of Malta.”¹⁷⁰

In Acts 28:1, the name of the island where Paul shipwrecked is *Melite*, in Greek. Often scholars identify the island with the modern island of Malta (*Melite Africana*). However, Otto Meinardus argues for the case that Paul shipwrecked on the island of Mljet (*Melite Illyrica*), off the Dalmatian coast, as stated in a low-key local tradition going back as early as the tenth century.¹⁷¹ He bases this assessment on written ecclesiastical and public traditions as well as modern oral traditions.¹⁷² Many older residents of the island believe the shipwreck took place near the southeastern tip of the island, by Saplunara Cove where two strong currents converge, which seems to best fit the biblical description of the “Dithalasson,” where two seas meet in Acts 27:41.¹⁷³ Meinardus spoke with residents who say that many kinds of snakes live on the island

¹⁶⁸ Dennis Ronald MacDonald, "The Shipwrecks of Odysseus and Paul," *New Testament Studies* 45, no. 1 (January 1999): 92-107.

¹⁶⁹ J. M. Gilchrist, "The Historicity of Paul's Shipwreck," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* (March 1996): 51.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Otto F. A. Meinardus, "St. Paul Shipwrecked in Dalmatia," *Biblical Archaeologist* 39, no. 4 (December 1976): 145.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 146.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 147.

Mljet, lending support to Mljet being the island where Paul shipwrecked since he was bit by a viper.¹⁷⁴

When Paul shakes off a viper after a shipwreck in Acts 28:1-6, John Clabeaux sees Luke making intentional, complex, and artful parallels between Paul and Jesus in regards to His ministry, in Luke 3-4, and His death, in Luke 23-24.¹⁷⁵ In doing so, Luke makes an apologetic appeal for Paul, whom people reject and accuse, but whom God finds to be innocent and proceeds to protect him by His power. When a viper bites Paul, he could possibly die and onlookers think he will surely die in judgment for his crimes, but God protects him. Although Luke does not record Paul's death, Clabeaux sees apologetic significance in Luke describing Paul's last near death experience in Acts 28:1-6, just prior to Paul arriving in Rome.¹⁷⁶ Using a ship that had wintered at the island,¹⁷⁷ Paul sailed approximately 180 miles to Puteoli, in the bay of Naples, and stayed there with Christians for seven days, probably because the centurion Julius had business there.¹⁷⁸ From Puteoli, Paul journeyed on land to Rome.¹⁷⁹

Although no one can know for sure whether Paul went to Spain as he intended in his letter to the Romans,¹⁸⁰ Otto Meinardus documents that the early church and the church in Spain hold positive views on this. Three early Christian documents lend credence that Paul was cleared of his charges and released from prison in Rome after the two years mentioned in Acts 28:30: (1) Clement of Rome wrote an epistle to the Corinthians; (2) the Acts of Peter was written in the second century; (3) John Chrysostom and Jerome mention Paul's trip to Spain. Furthermore,

¹⁷⁴ Meinardus, "St. Paul Shipwrecked in Dalmatia," 147.

¹⁷⁵ John J. Clabeaux, "The Story of the Maltese Viper and Luke's Apology for Paul," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (October 2005): 605-610.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 606.

¹⁷⁷ Acts 28:11.

¹⁷⁸ Songer, "Acts 20-28: From Ephesus to Rome," 459-60.

¹⁷⁹ Acts 27:14.

¹⁸⁰ Romans 15:24, 28.

several churches in Spain, starting in the eighth century, have traditions of Paul ministering in significant ways at their particular place.¹⁸¹

Conclusion

Luke records in Acts how Christianity spread from Jerusalem to the Roman capital, from only a Jewish constituency to a constituency of Jews and numerous Gentiles,¹⁸² all within a timeframe of thirty years, expanding from great cities where Paul and others had planted the gospel and churches. Paul journeyed on three mission trips and visited some of the most important cities in the Roman Empire including Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus. Thus, Blevins says, “Acts 13-19 is more than a list of names and cities; it contains the milestones of the gospel on the march.”¹⁸³ As a general pattern described by Luke, Paul would first visit a synagogue and preach, and Jews and Greeks would believe; however, opposing Jews would stir up the Gentiles and then force Paul to leave. This pattern occurred at Iconium,¹⁸⁴ Lystra,¹⁸⁵ Thessalonica,¹⁸⁶ Berea,¹⁸⁷ Corinth,¹⁸⁸ and Ephesus,¹⁸⁹ as noted by Culpepper.¹⁹⁰ Further, after Jews from Asia falsely accuse Paul in the temple area in Jerusalem,¹⁹¹ Roman officials imprisoned Paul in Caesarea, where Paul appealed the conviction and journeyed to the most important city of the empire, Rome, where he had more opportunities to proclaim the gospel.

¹⁸¹ Otto F. A. Meinardus, "Paul's Missionary Journey to Spain: Tradition and Folklore," *Biblical Archaeologist* 41, no. 2 (June 1978): 61-63.

¹⁸² Culpepper, 487.

¹⁸³ Blevins, 449.

¹⁸⁴ Acts 14:1-7.

¹⁸⁵ Acts 14:8-20.

¹⁸⁶ Acts 17:1-10.

¹⁸⁷ Acts 17:10-14.

¹⁸⁸ Acts 18:1-18.

¹⁸⁹ Acts 19:8-10.

¹⁹⁰ Culpepper, 489.

¹⁹¹ Acts 21:27-29.

This paper has followed Paul's three missionary journeys and his journey to Rome using the outline and narration given in the book of Acts. Using scholarly resources, this writer supplemented the narration of the journeys with further background information and comments, showing the plausibility of their historicity and gaining alternative perspectives to understanding the narration of the events of the apostle Paul. Such background information helps a biblical interpreter to grasp the intended meaning of the narration by the author of Acts, namely Luke. The background information and comments also help to bring the land and sea voyages to life as this paper further describes and clarifies for the reader the places and customs of the time. As the book of Acts demonstrates its trustworthiness in areas that can be verified, the theological message intended by God becomes even more potent as readers are more inclined to believe that the message within the book ultimately came from God, who is always truthful and trustworthy.

While the focus of this paper is to relay information, details, and comments about Paul's journeys, the paper subsequently shows evidence for the historicity of Paul's journeys. To illustrate this method and further support such a conclusion, Jefferson White shows in his book, *Evidence & Paul's Journeys*, that Paul's journeys as recorded in the book of Acts by Luke have historical evidence.¹⁹² For example, scholars have dramatically confirmed that the account of Paul's shipwreck must have happened the way Luke records it, according to meteorological and nautical evidence. While only a few of Luke's narrative are spectacularly confirmed like this, various portions of the book of Acts are confirmed by small pieces of evidence that, when viewed as a whole, "demonstrates the extraordinary historical accuracy of Luke's narrative."¹⁹³ F. F. Bruce and C. J. Hemer, who show that Luke is "the user of reliable traditions" and "a careful historian who stands alongside the best of ancient historians," further confirm the case for

¹⁹² Jefferson White, *Evidence & Paul's Journeys: An Historical Investigation into the Travels of the Apostle Paul* (Hillard, OH: Parsagard, 2001).

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

the historicity of Lucan writings and the journeys of Paul.¹⁹⁴ The historical details found in Paul's journeys accurately "reflect the political, social, and legal life of the middle of the first century."¹⁹⁵ Thus, this paper also shows many small incidents in Paul's journeys that are clearly plausible based on other evidence discovered from the time of Paul's world, thus demonstrating the historicity of the journeys of Paul.

Bauckham entertains the question "What if Paul had traveled east rather than west?"¹⁹⁶ Answering the question, Bauckham establishes a balanced view of the contribution Paul made in spreading the Christian gospel in the Mediterranean world of the Roman Empire. Exaggerated views say, "Paul invented Christianity or that without Paul Christianity would have remained a sect within Judaism."¹⁹⁷ However, without negating the great contribution Paul made for Christianity, Bauckham defends the case that the Christian movement would have still spread throughout the Roman Empire and had the same long-term effects even without Paul.¹⁹⁸ Even before Paul's journeys, missionaries brought the gospel to Gentiles in Acts 10-11 and the gospel spread to places such as Rome and Egypt without Paul's evangelization.¹⁹⁹ Other examples of evangelism outside Paul's influence include Barnabas and Mark traveling to Cyprus in Acts 15:39, Priscilla and Aquila evangelizing in Corinth in Acts 18:2, and Apollos from Alexandria teaching in Ephesus and being helped by Priscilla and Aquilla in Acts 18:24-26.²⁰⁰ Nevertheless, Paul surely had a significant role in the expansion of Christianity as recorded by Luke in the canonical Bible, with Paul's journeys and actions recorded for posterity as examples, as history, and as instruction in theological doctrine.

¹⁹⁴ Marshall, *Luke: Historian & Theologian*, 226.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 127-28.

¹⁹⁶ Bauckham, 171.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 181-84.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 182.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 183.

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