

LIVING GODS WILL

The Apostle

PAUL



Paul in Athens by Raphael

The Apostle PAUL

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- Born:** 5 AD, Tarsus, Cilicia
- Died:** 67 AD (aged 62), Rome, Italy
- Died:** Paul was beheaded in Rome by orders of Nero.

"Paul" wasn't his birth name (**Saul** was)

He was a **tent maker** and a **Pharisee**

The Apostle Paul authored 14 books of the Holy Bible

1. The Book of Romans
2. The Book of 1st Corinthians
3. The Book of 2nd Corinthians
4. The Book of Galatians
5. The Book of Ephesians
6. The Book of Philippians
7. The Book of Colossians
8. The Book of 1st Thessalonians
9. The Book of 2nd Thessalonians
10. The Book of 1st Timothy
11. The Book of 2nd Timothy
12. The Book of Titus
13. The Book of Philemon
14. The Book of Hebrews

Paul the Apostle commonly known as **Saint Paul** and also known by his Jewish name **Saul of Tarsus** was an apostle (**although not one of the Twelve Apostles**) who taught the gospel of Christ to the first-century world. Paul is generally considered one of the most important figures of the Apostolic Age and in the mid-30s to the mid-50s AD he founded several churches in Asia Minor and Europe. He took advantage of his status as both a **Jew and a Roman citizen** to minister to both Jewish and Roman audiences.

According to writings in the New Testament and prior to his conversion, Paul was dedicated to persecuting the early disciples of Jesus in the area of Jerusalem. In the narrative of the Acts of the Apostles (often referred to simply as Acts), Paul was traveling on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus on a mission to "arrest them and bring them back to Jerusalem" when the resurrected Jesus appeared to him in a great light. He was struck blind, but after three days his sight was restored by **Ananias** of Damascus and Paul began to preach that Jesus of Nazareth is the **Jewish Messiah** and the **Son of God**. Approximately half of the book of Acts deals with Paul's life and works.

Thirteen of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament have traditionally been attributed to Paul. Seven of the **Pauline epistles** are undisputed by scholars as being authentic, with varying degrees of argument about the remainder.

Pauline authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews is not asserted in the Epistle itself and was already doubted in the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

It was almost unquestioningly accepted from the 5th to the 16th centuries that Paul was the author of **Hebrews**, but that view is now almost universally rejected by scholars. The other six are believed by some scholars to have come from followers writing in his name, using material from Paul's surviving letters and letters written by him that no longer survive. Other scholars argue that the idea of a pseudonymous author for the disputed epistles raises many problems.

Today, Paul's epistles continue to be vital roots of the theology, worship and pastoral life in the Catholic and Protestant traditions of the West, as well as the Orthodox traditions of the East. Paul's influence on Christian thought and practice has been characterized as being as "profound as it is pervasive", among that of many other apostles and missionaries involved in the spread of the Christian faith.

It has been popularly assumed that Saul's name was changed when he became a follower of Jesus Christ, but that is not the case. **His Jewish name was "Saul"**, perhaps after the biblical King Saul, a fellow Benjamite and the first king of Israel. According to the Book of Acts, he was a Roman citizen. (**Acts 22:25–29**) As a Roman citizen, he also bore the **Latin name of "Paul"** (essentially a Latin transliteration of Saul). It was typical for the Jews of that time to have two names, one Hebrew, the other Latin or Greek.

Jesus called him "Saul, Saul" in "the Hebrew tongue" in the book of Acts, when he had the vision which led to his conversion on the Road to Damascus. Later, in a vision to **Ananias** of Damascus, "the Lord" referred to him as "Saul, of Tarsus". When Ananias came to restore his sight, he called him "Brother Saul".

In **Acts 13:9**, Saul is called "Paul" for the first time on the island of Cyprus—much later than the time of his conversion. The author (**Luke**) indicates that the names were interchangeable: "Saul, who also is called Paul." He thereafter refers to him as Paul, apparently Paul's preference since he is called Paul in all other Bible books where he is mentioned, including those that he authored. Adopting his Roman name was typical of Paul's missionary style. His method was to put people at their ease and to approach them with his message in a language and style to which they could relate, as in **1 Cor 9:19–23**

The main source for information about Paul's life is the material found in his epistles and in Acts. However, the epistles contain little information about Paul's pre-conversion past. The book of Acts recounts more information but leaves several parts of Paul's life out of its narrative, such as his probable but undocumented execution in Rome. Some scholars believe Acts also contradicts Paul's epistles on multiple accounts, in particular concerning the frequency of Paul's visits to the church in Jerusalem.

The two main sources of information by which we have access to the earliest segments of Paul's career are the Bible's Book of Acts and the autobiographical elements of Paul's letters to the early church communities. Paul was likely born between the years of 5 BC and 5 AD. The Book of Acts indicates that Paul was a Roman citizen by birth.

He was from a devout Jewish family in the city of Tarsus, one of the largest trade centers on the Mediterranean coast. It had been in existence several hundred years prior to his birth. It was renowned for its university. During the time of **Alexander the Great**, who died in 323 BC, Tarsus was the most influential city in Asia Minor.

Paul referred to himself as being "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, **a Pharisee**".

The Bible reveals very little about Paul's family. Paul's nephew, his sister's son, is mentioned in **Acts 23:16**. Acts also quotes Paul referring to his father by saying he, Paul, was "**a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee**" (**Acts 23:6**). In **Romans 16:7** he states that his relatives, **Andronicus** and **Junia**, were Christians before he was and were prominent among the apostles.

The family had a history of religious piety (**2 Timothy 1:3**). Apparently the family lineage had been very attached to Pharisaic traditions and observances for generations. (**Philippians 3:5-6**) Acts says that he was in the **tent-making profession**. (**Acts 18:1-3**) This was to become an initial connection with **Priscilla and Aquila** with whom he would partner in tentmaking (**Acts 18:3**) and later become very important teammates as fellow missionaries. (**Rom. 16:4**)

Professor Robert Eisenman of California State University, Long Beach argues that Paul was a member of the family of **Herod the Great**. Eisenman makes a connection between Paul and an individual identified by **Josephus** as "**Saulus**", a "kinsman of Agrippa". Another oft-cited element of the case for Paul as a member of Herod's family is found in (**Romans 16:11**) where Paul writes, "Greet Herodion, my kinsman".

While he was still fairly young, he was sent to Jerusalem to receive his education at the school of **Gamaliel**, (**Acts 22:3**) one of the most noted rabbis in history. The Hillel school was noted for giving its students a balanced education, likely giving Paul broad exposure to classical literature, philosophy, and ethics. Some of his family may have resided in Jerusalem since later the son of one of his sisters saved his life there. (**Acts 23:16**)

Nothing more is known of his background until he takes an active part in the martyrdom of **Stephen**. (**Acts 7:58-60; 22:20**) Paul confesses that "beyond measure" he persecuted the church of God prior to his conversion. (**Gal. 1:13-14, Phil. 3:6, Acts 8:1-3**) Although we know from his biography and from Acts that Paul could speak Hebrew, modern scholarship suggests that Koine Greek was his first language.

In his letters, Paul drew heavily on his knowledge of Stoic philosophy, using Stoic terms and metaphors to assist his new Gentile converts in their understanding of the revealed word of God.

He also owed much to his training in the law and the prophets, utilizing this knowledge to convince his Jewish countrymen of the unity of past Old Testament prophecy and covenants with the fulfilling of these in Jesus Christ. His wide spectrum of experiences and education gave the "Apostle to the Gentiles" (**Rom. 1:5, 11:13, Gal. 2:8**) the tools which he later would use to effectively spread the Gospel and to establish the church in the Roman Empire.

Paul's conversion can be dated to 31–36 by his reference to it in one of his letters. In Galatians 1:16 Paul writes that God "was pleased to reveal his son to me." In **1 Corinthians 15:8**, as he lists the order in which Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, Paul writes, "last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also."

According to the account in Acts, it took place on the road to Damascus, where he reported having experienced a vision of the resurrected Jesus. The account says that "he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Saul replied, "Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: [it is] hard for thee to kick against the pricks (goads)." (**Acts 9:4–5**)

According to the account in (**Acts 9:1–22**), he was blinded for three days and had to be led into Damascus by the hand. During these three days, Saul took no food or water and spent his time in prayer to God. When **Ananias** of Damascus arrived, he laid his hands on him and said: "Brother Saul, the Lord, Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the **Holy Ghost**." (**Acts 9:17**) His sight was restored, he got up and was baptized. (**Acts 9:18**) This story occurs only in Acts, not in the Pauline epistles.

The author of Acts of the Apostles may have learned of Paul's conversion from the church in Jerusalem, or from the church in Antioch, or possibly from Paul himself.

And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." And all who heard him were amazed and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?" But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

After his conversion, Paul went to Damascus, where **Acts 9** states he was healed of his blindness and baptized by Ananias of Damascus. Paul says that it was in Damascus that he barely escaped death. (**2 Cor. 11:32**) Paul also says that he then went first to Arabia, and then came back to Damascus. (**Gal. 1:17**) Paul's trip to Arabia is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible, and some suppose he actually traveled to Mount Sinai for meditations in the desert. He describes in Galatians how three years after his conversion he went to Jerusalem. There he met **James** and stayed with **Simon Peter** for 15 days. (**Gal. 1:13–24**) Paul located **Mount Sinai** in Arabia in **Galatians 4:24–25**.

Paul asserted that he received the Gospel not from man, but directly by "the revelation of Jesus Christ". (**Gal 1:11–16**) He claimed almost total independence from the Jerusalem community, but agreed with it on the nature and content of the gospel. [Gal 1:22–24] He appeared eager to bring material support to Jerusalem from the various growing Gentile churches that he started. In his writings, Paul used the persecutions he endured to avow proximity and union with Jesus and as a validation of his teaching.

Paul's narrative in Galatians states that 14 years after his conversion he went again to Jerusalem. (**Gal. 2:1–10**) It is not known what happened during this time, but both Acts and Galatians provide some details. At the end of this time, **Barnabas** went to find Paul and brought him back to Antioch. (**Acts 11:26**)

When a famine occurred in Judea, around 45–46, Paul and Barnabas journeyed to Jerusalem to deliver financial support from the Antioch community. According to Acts, Antioch had become an alternative center for Christians following the dispersion of the believers after the death of **Stephen**. It was in Antioch that the followers of Jesus were first called "Christians".

First missionary journey

The author of Acts arranges Paul's travels into three separate journeys. The first journey, (**Acts 13–14**) led initially by **Barnabas**, took Paul from Antioch to Cyprus then into southern Asia Minor (Anatolia), and finally returning to Antioch. In Cyprus, Paul rebukes and blinds **Elymas** the magician (**Acts 13:8–12**) who was criticizing their teachings.

They sail to Perga in Pamphylia. **John Mark** leaves them and returns to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas go on to Pisidian Antioch. On Sabbath they go to the synagogue. The leaders invite them to speak. Paul reviews Israelite history from life in Egypt to King David. He introduces Jesus as a descendant of David brought to Israel by God.

He said that his team came to town to bring the message of salvation. He recounts the story of Jesus' death and resurrection. He quotes from the Septuagint to assert that Jesus was the promised **Christos** who brought them forgiveness for their sins. Both the Jews and the "God-fearing" Gentiles invited them to talk more next Sabbath. At that time almost the whole city gathered. This upset some influential Jews who spoke against them. Paul used the occasion to announce a change in his mission which from then on would be to the Gentiles. (**Acts 13:13–48**)

Interval at Antioch

Antioch served as a major Christian center for Paul's evangelism, and he remained there for "a long time with the disciples" at the conclusion of his first journey. The exact duration of Paul's stay in Antioch is unknown, with estimates ranging from nine months to as long as eight years.

Council of Jerusalem

A vital meeting between Paul and the Jerusalem church took place some time in the years 50–51, described in **Acts 15:2** and usually seen as the same event mentioned by Paul in **Galatians 2:1**. The key question raised was whether Gentile converts needed to be circumcised. At this meeting, Paul states in his letter to the Galatians, **Peter**, **James**, and **John** accepted Paul's mission to the Gentiles.

The Jerusalem meetings are mentioned in Acts, and also in Paul's letters. For example, the Jerusalem visit for famine relief (**Acts 11:27–30**) apparently corresponds to the "first visit" (to Peter and James only). (**Gal. 1:18–20**)

Incident at Antioch

Despite the agreement achieved at the Council of Jerusalem, Paul recounts how he later publicly confronted Peter in a dispute sometimes called the "Incident at Antioch", over Peter's reluctance to share a meal with Gentile Christians in Antioch because they did not strictly adhere to Jewish customs.

Writing later of the incident, Paul recounts, "I opposed [**Peter**] to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong", and says he told Peter, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?" (**Gal. 2:11–14**) Paul also mentions that even **Barnabas**, his traveling companion and fellow apostle until that time, sided with **Peter**.

The final outcome of the incident remains uncertain. The Catholic Encyclopedia suggests that Paul won the argument, because "Paul's account of the incident leaves no doubt that Peter saw the justice of the rebuke". However Paul himself never mentions a victory. The primary source account of the Incident at Antioch is Paul's letter to the Galatians. (**Gal. 2:11–14**)

Second missionary journey

Paul left for his second missionary journey from Jerusalem, in late Autumn 49, after the meeting of the Council of Jerusalem where the circumcision question was debated. On their trip around the Mediterranean Sea, Paul and his companion **Barnabas** stopped in Antioch where they had a sharp argument about taking **John Mark** with them on their trips. The book of Acts said that John Mark had left them in a previous trip and gone home. Unable to resolve the dispute, Paul and Barnabas decided to separate; Barnabas took John Mark with him, while **Silas** joined Paul.

Paul and Silas initially visited Tarsus (Paul's birthplace), Derbe and Lystra. In Lystra, they met **Timothy**, a disciple who was spoken well of, and decided to take him with them. Paul and his companions, Silas and Timothy, had plans to journey to the southwest portion of Asia Minor to preach the gospel but during the night, Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him to go to Macedonia to help them. After seeing the vision, Paul and his companions left for Macedonia to preach the gospel to them. (**Acts 16:6–10**) The Church kept growing, adding believers, and strengthening in faith daily. (**Acts 16:5**)

In Philippi, Paul cast a spirit of divination out of a servant girl, whose masters were then unhappy about the loss of income her soothsaying provided (**Acts 16:16–24**). They turned the city against the missionaries, and Paul and Silas were put in jail. After a miraculous earthquake, the gates of the prison fell apart and Paul and Silas could have escaped but remained; this event led to the conversion of the jailor (**Acts 16:25–40**). They continued traveling, going by Berea and then to Athens, where Paul preached to the Jews and God-fearing Greeks in the synagogue and to the Greek intellectuals in the Areopagus. Paul continued from Athens to Corinth.

Interval in Corinth

Around 50–52, Paul spent 18 months in Corinth. The reference in Acts to Proconsul Gallio helps ascertain this date (cf. Gallio Inscription). In Corinth, Paul met **Priscilla** and **Aquila** (**Acts 18:2**), who became faithful believers and helped Paul through his other missionary journeys. The couple followed Paul and his companions to Ephesus, and stayed there to start one of the strongest and most faithful churches at that time (**Acts 18:18–21**).

In 52, departing from Corinth, Paul stopped at the nearby village of Cenchreae to have his hair cut off, because of a vow he had earlier taken. It is possible this was to be a final haircut prior to fulfilling his vow to become a Nazirite for a defined period of time. With **Priscilla** and **Aquila**, the missionaries then sailed to Ephesus and then Paul alone went on to Caesarea to greet the Church there.

He then traveled north to Antioch, where he stayed for some time, perhaps about a year, before leaving again on a third missionary journey. Some New Testament texts suggest that he also visited Jerusalem during this period for one of the Jewish feasts, possibly Pentecost. Textual critic Henry Alford and others consider the reference to a Jerusalem visit to be genuine and it accords with **Acts 21:29**, according to which Paul and **Trophimus** the Ephesian had previously been seen in Jerusalem.

Third missionary journey

According to Acts, Paul began his third missionary journey by travelling all around the region of Galatia and Phrygia to strengthen, teach and rebuke the believers. Paul then traveled to Ephesus, an important center of early Christianity, and stayed there for almost three years, probably working there as a tentmaker, as he had done when he stayed in Corinth. He is claimed to have performed numerous miracles, healing people and casting out demons, and he apparently organized missionary activity in other regions. Paul left Ephesus after an attack from a local silversmith resulted in a pro-Artemis riot involving most of the city. During his stay in Ephesus, Paul wrote four letters to the church in Corinth.

Paul went through Macedonia into Achaea (**Acts 20:1–2**) and stayed in Greece, probably Corinth, for three months (**Acts 20:1–2**) during 56–57 AD. Commentators generally agree that Paul dictated his Epistle to the Romans during this period. He then made ready to continue on to Syria, but he changed his plans and traveled back through Macedonia because of some Jews who had made a plot against him.

In **Romans 15:19** Paul wrote that he visited Illyricum, but he may have meant what would now be called Illyria Graeca, which was at that time a division of the Roman province of Macedonia. On their way back to Jerusalem, Paul and his companions visited other cities such as Philippi, Troas, Miletus, Rhodes, and Tyre. Paul finished his trip with a stop in Caesarea, where he and his companions stayed with **Philip the Evangelist** before finally arriving at Jerusalem. (**Acts 21:8–10, 21:15**)

Journey from Rome to Spain

Among the writings of the early Christians, **Pope Clement I** said that Paul was "Herald (of the Gospel of Christ) in the West", and that "he had gone to the extremity of the west". John Chrysostom indicated that Paul preached in Spain: "For after he had been in Rome, he returned to Spain, but whether he came thence again into these parts, we know not".

Cyril of Jerusalem said that Paul, "fully preached the Gospel, and instructed even imperial Rome, and carried the earnestness of his preaching as far as Spain, undergoing conflicts innumerable, and performing Signs and wonders". The Muratorian fragment mentions "the departure of Paul from the city [of Rome] when he journeyed to Spain".

Last visit to Jerusalem and arrest

In 57, upon completion of his third missionary journey, Paul arrived in Jerusalem for his fifth and final visit with a collection of money for the local community. Acts reports that he initially was warmly received. However, Acts goes on to recount how Paul was warned by **James** and the elders that he was gaining a reputation for being against the Law, saying "they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake **Moses**, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs". Paul underwent a purification ritual in order to give the Jews no grounds to bring accusations against him for not following their law. (**Acts 21:17–26**)

After seven days in Jerusalem, some "Jews from Asia" (most likely from Roman Asia) accused Paul of defiling the temple by bringing gentiles into it. He was seized and dragged out of the temple by an angry mob. He narrowly escaped being killed by surrendering to a group of Roman centurions, who arrested him, put him in chains and took him to the tribune. (**Acts 21:27–36**)

When a plot to kill Paul on his way to an appearance before the Jews was discovered, he was transported by night to Caesarea Maritima. He was held as a prisoner there for two years by **Marcus Antonius Felix**, until a new governor, **Porcius Festus**, reopened his case in 59.

When Festus suggested that he be sent back to Jerusalem for further trial, Paul exercised his right as a Roman citizen to "appeal unto Caesar". Finally, Paul and his companions sailed for Rome where Paul was to stand trial for his alleged crimes.

Acts recounts that on the way to Rome for his appeal as a Roman citizen to Caesar, Paul was shipwrecked on "Melita" (Malta), (**Acts 27:39–44**) where the islanders showed him "unusual kindness" and where he was met by **Publius**. (**Acts 28:1–10**) From Malta, he travelled to Rome via Syracuse, Rhegium and Puteoli. (**Acts 28:11–14**)

Two years in Rome

He finally arrived in Rome around 60, where he spent another two years under house arrest. The narrative of Acts ends with Paul preaching in Rome for two years from his rented home while awaiting trial. (**Acts 28:30–31**)

Irenaeus wrote in the 2nd century that Peter and Paul had been the founders of the church in Rome and had appointed **Linus** as succeeding bishop. Paul was not a bishop of Rome, nor did he bring Christianity to Rome since there were already Christians in Rome when he arrived there. (**Acts 28:14–15**) Also, Paul wrote his letter to the church at Rome before he had visited Rome. (**Romans 1:1,7,11–13;15:23–29**) Paul only played a supporting part in the life of the church in Rome.

Death

The date of Paul's death is believed to have occurred after the **Great Fire of Rome** in July 64, but before the last year of Nero's reign, in 68. According to several Church Fathers and apocryphal books, **Paul was beheaded** in Rome by orders of **Nero**.

A legend later developed that his martyrdom occurred at the *Aquae Salviae*, on the *Via Laurentina*. According to this legend, after Paul was decapitated, his severed head rebounded three times, giving rise to a source of water each time that it touched the ground, which is how the place earned the name "San Paolo alle Tre Fontane" ("St Paul at the Three Fountains").

Also according to legend, Paul's body was buried outside the walls of Rome, at the second mile on the *Via Ostiensis*, on the estate owned by a Christian woman named **Lucina**. It was here, in the fourth century, that the **Emperor Constantine the Great** built a first church. Then, between the fourth and fifth centuries it was considerably enlarged by the Emperors Valentinian I, Valentinian II, Theodosius I, and Arcadius. The present-day **Basilica of Saint Paul** Outside the Walls was built there in 1800.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE

Acts 13:2 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.

Acts 13:9 But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him.

Galatians 1:1 Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.

PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS



The Conversion of St. Paul by Peter Paul Rubens

