

I. Paul's First Missionary Journey

A. First serious attempt to reach Gentiles

Verse by verse summary

Acts 13

1-3 - Paul and Barnabas sent out from the church of Antioch.

4 - Went to Seleucia and then sailed to Cyprus

5 - Salamis

6-12 - Paphos -- the proconsul became a believer

9 - First time Saul is called Paul. From here on out he assumes leadership of their group.

13 - sailed to Perga

14 - On to Pisidian Antioch

16-41 - Paul preaches in the synagogue at Antioch

1. anticipation of and preparation for the coming of the Messiah (16-25)

2. the rejection, crucifixion, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus (26-37)

3. the application and appeal (38-41)

42 - They are invited back next week to preach again

43 - many followed and they were urged to "continue in the grace of God"

44 - almost the whole city comes for the next week

45-52 - Confrontation with jealous Jews and they tell them that since they've rejected than they will turn to the Gentiles. The Word of the Lord spread through the whole region but the Jews incited persecution so they dusted off their feet and went to Iconium.

Acts 14

1-7 - On to Iconium -- Preached effectively in the synagogue again also performed miracles as an authentication. Many came to Christ but there was a sharp division and there was a plot against them. They left for Lystra.

8-20 - Amazing events at Lystra - Read

21 - Won many disciples in Derbe.

21 - 25 - Traveled back through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. They encouraged the disciples along the way and appointed elders in each church

26 - 28 - From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch.

Read 27-28

II. Galatians

A. AUTHOR

Paul, the Apostle.

B. DATE

According to the south Galatian theory (i.e., in its most popular form), the terminus ad quem of this epistle must be before the Council of Acts 15 and the terminus a quo must be after Paul's visit to Jerusalem in Acts 11:30. In other words, Galatians must have been written between autumn, 46 CE and autumn, 48 CE.

There is a significant problem for this dating, however, because of a couple chronological notes within Galatians itself. In Gal. 1:18 Paul speaks of going to Jerusalem "after three years"—i.e., after three years since his conversion. This Jerusalem visit corresponds to the one mentioned in Acts 9:26. In Gal. 2:1 he gives a second chronological note: "Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me." This corresponds to the visit mentioned in Acts 11:30. If these seventeen years—from Paul's conversion until the Jerusalem visit in Acts 11:30 (autumn, 46 CE)—are seventeen complete years, then this would make Paul's conversion occur in 29 CE—that is, on any reasonable reckoning, before the death of Christ! Further, in our understanding, the death of our Lord occurred in 33 CE, and Paul's conversion in 34 CE. There are three ways to deal with this problem from a south Galatian position.

(1) It is possible to reckon the years as inclusive years (a very natural form of expression in ancient times)—i.e., to recognize that the fourteen years means twelve full years and portions of two others; the three years means one full year and portions of two others. If so, then the formula for this is as follows: "after three years" = A + 1 year + B; "after fourteen years" = C + 12 years + D. "Thus, taking a, b, c and d as unknown number of months, the total could be approximately 14 years." This would be true even if each unknown quantity equaled, on average, three months. If so, Paul's conversion could have been in 32 CE if the famine visit was as early as 46 CE. In fact, if the death of Jesus occurred in 30 CE, Paul's conversion could be as early as 31, allowing as much as six months for the unknown quantities. This is quite possible, provided that one is amenable to a 30 CE crucifixion date.

(2) It is possible to treat the three years as occurring within the fourteen years, rather than as occurring before the fourteen years. In other words, Gal. 2:1 might be read: "Then, fourteen years [after my conversion], I went up . . ." It is often objected that this is special pleading, and well it might be. However, the real basis of the argument is often missed. The fact that e[peita is used in 1:18, 21, and 2:1 is often seen as crucial: in 1:18 and 1:21 there is obviously chronological succession and hence we should see this in 2:1 as well. However, there is a difference: in 1:18 metav is used to indicate the time element ("after three years"), while in 2:1 diav is used. This may mean "within fourteen years." But this does not seem to make an advance over our original understanding of inclusive years. It is quite possible, however, to treat the e[peita in 2:1 as resumptive of the e[peita of 1:18, rather than as sequential to it. Although 1:21 suggests sequence, no years are mentioned; consequently, both in 1:18 and 2:1 Paul may well be marking time from his conversion. If this is the case, then fourteen years (i.e., 12 + A + B) could easily fit a conversion in (spring?) 34 CE and a Jerusalem visit in (fall) 46 CE.

(3) It is possible to combine either of the above approaches with a famine visit date of 47 CE (instead of 46 CE). If so, there is more latitude on the front end as well (i.e., the dates of Christ's death and the conversion of Paul).

In sum, Paul's chronological notes in Gal. 1:18 and 2:1 do not really pose any real problem for the south Galatian theory, even if one were to hold to a 33 CE crucifixion date for Christ.

As the date of this epistle, this can be more precisely determined as we look at the occasion. Suffice it to say here, it seems that this letter was written shortly before the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15—that is, in late summer/fall of 48 CE (or 49 CE).

C. AUDIENCE

The key introductory issue in Galatians is the destination. Until comparatively recent times, biblical scholars assumed that this epistle was sent to the churches in the geographical region known as Galatia, in north central Asia Minor. Thus, Paul would have visited the region on his second missionary journey (cf. Acts 16:6; 18:23) and his visit to Jerusalem (recorded in Gal. 2) would correspond to Acts 15. The epistle would then be sent sometime on Paul's third missionary journey, perhaps from Corinth (Acts 20:3), in 55/56 CE. This view is known as the "North Galatian Theory" since the churches would be in the geographical Galatia, which was in the north.

But in fairly recent times, largely due to the archeological efforts of Sir William Ramsey, a new theory has been proposed—the "South Galatian Theory." Not only Ramsey, but the majority of NT scholars today, would hold that Paul wrote this letter to the churches in the political province of Galatia—i.e., an area which the Roman government designated as Galatia. This province included cities substantially to the south of the geographical region of Galatia, including Lystra, Derbe, and Iconium. Paul had visited these cities on his first missionary journey. If the south Galatian theory is true, then there is no need to identify Gal. 2 with Acts 15, for the events described in Gal. 2 may well have happened on an earlier visit to Jerusalem. The letter would then have been written sometime before the events of Acts 15. The date of Galatians could then be as early as 47-49 CE, depending on when the Council at Jerusalem in Acts 15 is to be dated.

What is at stake here is both the date of this epistle and the interpretation of Gal. 2:1-10 (in terms of its historical setting). Less directly, the historical value of Acts is involved, as well as how to evaluate the theological development in the mind of Paul between the writing of Galatians and Romans. Finally, if Galatians is dated early (a la the south Galatian theory), then this letter becomes the first canonical Pauline epistle. [Full explanation of these theories can be found at http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=1237]

D. PURPOSE

From *Bruce Commentary on Galatians*:

When, as we are told in Acts 15:1, Judaeen visitors came to Syrian Antioch and started to teach the Christians there that those who were not circumcised in accordance with the law of Moses could not be saved, it is antecedently probable that others who wished to press the same line visited the recently formed daughter-churches of Antioch, not only in Syria and Cilicia, as the apostolic letter indicates (Acts 15:23), but also in South Galatia. If so, then the letter to the Galatians was written as soon as Paul got news of what was afoot, on the event of the Jerusalem meeting described in Acts 15:6ff. This, it is suggested, would yield the most satisfactory correlation of the data of Galatians and Acts and the most satisfactory dating of Galatians. It must be conceded that, if this is so, Galatians is the earliest among the extant letters of Paul.

The purpose of this letter was obviously, then, to refute the Judaizers' false gospel—a gospel in which these Jewish Christians felt that circumcision was essential to salvation—and to remind the Galatians of the real basis of their salvation. It was the urgency of the situation which moved Paul to write even before the Jerusalem Council convened, for the churches of Galatia were at stake.

Basic Galatians Outline

- a. Chapters 1-2 -- Paul establishes his apostleship and message as being directly from Christ. Refutes the false gospel of the Judaizers.
- b. Chapters 3-4 -- Paul contends for the true Gospel of grace, that is justification by faith alone.
- c. Chapters 5-6 -- Paul teaches that Christian liberty does not mean license and that Christians should live by the power of the Holy Spirit (“fruit of the Spirit” instead of “works of the flesh”)

5:1-6 for Observation, Interpretation, Application

III. Jerusalem Council

What matters to God is the Circumcision of the Heart

14 To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. 15 Yet the Lord set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today. 16 Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer (Deuteronomy 10:14-16, NIV).

6 The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live (Deuteronomy 30:6, NIV).

1 “If you will return, O Israel, return to me,” declares the Lord. “If you put your detestable idols out of my sight and no longer go astray, 2 and if in a truthful, just and righteous way you swear, ‘As surely as the Lord lives,’ then the nations will be blessed by him and in him they will glory.” 3 This is what the Lord says to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem: “Break up your unplowed ground and do not sow among thorns. 4 Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, circumcise your hearts, you men of Judah and people of Jerusalem, or my wrath will break out and burn like fire because of the evil you have done—burn with no one to quench it (Jeremiah 4:1-4, NIV).

23 This is what the Lord says: “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, 24 but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the Lord. 25 “The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will punish all who are circumcised only in the flesh—26 Egypt, Judah, Edom, Ammon, Moab and all who live in the desert in distant places. For all these nations are really uncircumcised, and even the whole house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart” (Jeremiah 9:23-26, NIV).

OT says that a New Covenant coming

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Jeremiah 31:31-33, NASB).