

The Life and Times of Paul - Apostle of Jesus Christ

The Time

- Paul was born in the first century of the common era (CE).
- Jesus is crucified in 30 CE.
- Paul received his call around the year 33 CE.
- Paul died in Rome in 64 CE under the Roman Emperor Nero.
- The Jewish Revolt took place from 66 to 70 CE with the temple being destroyed in 70.
- The Gospel of Mark was written during the revolt, as early as 68 CE, with some scholars dating it to after the fall of the temple.

Paul: What we know

For this study we will not use the book of Acts to try and understand Paul. The author of Luke/Acts has an agenda and writes to fulfill that agenda. Acts is not a great historical source.

Paul gives us biographical information.

- 1 Corinthians 15:1-11
- Galatians 1:11-24
- Philippians 3:2-11

Paul and Letters

Letters are situational. Paul is responding to certain situations in certain communities. He is not writing a systematic theology. We do not have the other half of the conversations that took place through the letters.

13 letters bear Paul's name.

We know he wrote seven:

- 1 Thessalonians (43-50 CE, earliest letter we have from Paul, maybe of the church)
- Philippians (Paul visit Philippi around 50 CE, letter follower sometime later)
- Galatians (50-55 CE, written to multiple "churches")
- 1 Corinthians (53-55 CE, written from Ephesus - see 16:8)
- Philemon (55 CE, written from prison)
- 2 Corinthians (evidence of several letters in this correspondence)
- Romans (56-57 CE, written from Corinth)

Six are disputed.

50/50 split among scholars:

- Colossians (If Paul - written around 55 CE, if not Paul - 65-75 CE)
- 2 Thessalonians

Letters Paul did not write (but bear his name):

- Ephesians
- The Pastorals
 - 1 & 2 Timothy
 - Titus

We know Paul did not write these because of differences in grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and ideas.

Letter writing is important to development of community. 24 of the 27 books of the New Testament are letters.

The Roman roads created an incredible infrastructure for travel during Paul's time. Letters could be exchanged in two to three weeks.

Important before we begin:

When we read Paul's letters, we need to ask ourselves:

"Did Paul say that?" - or "Do we want Paul to say that?"

- When reading Paul's letters (or any book), pay attention to feelings as you read.
- Write these feelings down.
- Include questions about clarity or things that do not resonate with you.
- Read the whole letter in one sitting - two or three times if you can. This helps to encounter the flow of the letter.