

(One of many Bible articles on the "Wielding the Sword of the Spirit" web site at [www.matthewmcgee.org](http://www.matthewmcgee.org))

# Chronology of Apostle Paul's Journeys and Epistles

Matthew McGee

An understanding of the chronological order of events in Paul's ministry can be very valuable as a tool for the study of Acts and Paul's epistles. The book of Acts and the epistles of Paul sometimes tell us the length of time between one event and another. However, determining the year in which an event took place can require some research. It is most helpful to know the year of the beginning or end of the reigns of political rulers that are mentioned in the text. Some of the more helpful dates in studying the events in Paul's ministry are the death of King Aretas of Syria in 40 AD, the beginning of the reign of Claudius Caesar as Emperor of Rome in 41 AD, the death of Herod Agrippa I in 44 AD, the succession of Felix's reign as Procurator in Judea by Porcius Festus in 60 AD.

Here is a summary of the years of Paul's journeys and his epistles. The detailed chronology follows this section. I have also included a map of Paul's journeys below since this article refers to so many different geographical locations. All of the major cities are identified, but you may wish to look on a more detailed map of Paul's journeys as well. Such a map may be found in the back of many Bibles and in some encyclopedias.

The table below lists, as accurately as I have been able to determine, the years of Paul's journeys and imprisonments.

Paul at Damascus	37-40 AD
First Journey	45-47 AD
Second Journey	51-53 AD
Third Journey	54-58 AD
Imprisonment in Judea	58-60 AD
Voyage to Rome	60-61 AD
Imprisonment in Rome	61-63 AD
Post-Imprisonment Journeys	63-67 AD

The table below lists, as accurately as I have been able to determine, the years in which Paul wrote his epistles.

First Thessalonians	52 AD
Second Thessalonians	52 AD
First Corinthians	57 AD
Second Corinthians	57 AD
Galatians	55-57 AD
Romans	57-58 AD
Ephesians	62 AD
Philippians	62 AD
Colossians	62 AD
Philemon	63 AD
Hebrews	64-65 AD
Titus	64-65 AD
First Timothy	64-65 AD
Second Timothy	66-67 AD

## The Chronology

The crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ occurred in the **spring of 32 AD**.

Day of Pentecost (Acts 2)

Stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:59)

In about **37 AD**, Jesus Christ speaks to Saul (Paul) on the road to Damascus.

Paul is led blind to Damascus (Acts 9:8).

After the visit by Ananias, Paul then goes to Arabia and returns to Damascus where he spends **3 years** (Galatians 1:17-18 and Acts 9:22-23). In 37 AD King Aretas took control of Damascus when Emperor Tiberius Caesar died. Paul departed from Damascus at night, being let down from the city wall in a basket (Acts 9:25 and 2 Corinthians 11:32). This could not have been after **40 AD**, the year that King Aretas died.

Paul met with Barnabus, Peter, and James in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26 and Galatians 1:18-19).

Paul in Caesarea and Tarsus (Acts 9:30)

Peter goes to house of Cornelius (Acts 10)

Barnabus gets Paul and they stay in Antioch (Syria) for one year (Acts 11:26). This must be **between 41 AD** (beginning of Claudius Caesar's reign) **and 44 AD** (Acts 11:28). Believers are first called Christians at Antioch.

James, brother of John, killed by Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:2).  
Herod Agrippa I dies in **44 AD** (Acts 12:23).



**The first journey begins** when Paul, Barnabas, and Mark set out from Antioch (Acts 13:4). This journey started after 44 AD and ended a "*long time*" (Acts 14:28) before 50 AD.

They left Antioch for Seleucia and sailed to Cyprus, large island 100 miles off Syrian coast. There they went to Salamis and Paphos where Paul met Bar-Jesus the sorcerer. (Acts 13:4-6).

Then they sail to Perga in Pamphylia, which is now southern Turkey. From here, Mark returns to Jerusalem.

At Antioch in Pisidia (not to be confused with the one in Syria), Paul and Barnabas turn to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46).

Then it was on to Iconium, where they abode a "*long time*" (Acts 14:3), Lystra, where Paul stoned, but lives (Acts 14:19), and Derbe. Then they retraced their steps back through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch (in Pisidia) (Acts 14:21).

Paul and Barnabas went throughout Pisidia, Pamphylia, then to Perga, Attalia, and sailed back to Antioch in Syria (Acts 14:24-26)

**The first journey ends** in Antioch, Syria, where Paul and Barnabas stay there a long time (Acts 14:28).

The dates for the events from 50-60 AD are found by counting backwards from the succession of Felix's reign as Procurator in Judea by Porcius Festus in 60 AD. Should one want to check these dates for accuracy, one should start at 60 AD and work backwards.

In about 50 AD, Paul and Barnabas go to the council in Jerusalem **14 years** after Paul's conversion (Galatians 2:1-9 and Acts 15:2).

Judas and Silas return to Antioch (Syria) with Barnabas and Paul where they continued some days (Acts 15:35-36), possibly in the winter of 50-51 AD.

**The second journey begins**, possibly in the spring of 51 AD. Paul takes Silas through Syria and Cilicia (now southeastern Turkey).

They came to Derbe and Lystra, where they find Timothy, who goes with Paul and Silas throughout Phrygia and Galatia. But they are forbidden by the Spirit to go into Asia or Bithynia. They passed through Mysia to Troas, the island of Samothracia, and then to Neapolis in Macedonia (now northern Greece).

At Philippi, God opens the heart of Lydia and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:14-34).

Passing through Amphipolis and Appolonia, they came to Thessalonica, where Paul taught for 3 weeks.

After teaching some in Berea, Paul departed ahead of Silas and Timothy, southward into Achaia (now southern Greece), to Athens, possibly for the winter of 51-52 AD (Acts 17:14-15).

Paul then makes his **first visit to Corinth** where he stays **a year and a half** (Acts 18:5). This may have been from the spring of 52 AD to the fall of 53 AD. Here, Paul met Aquila and Priscilla, who had just come from Rome, from which Claudius Caesar had banished all Jews. Silas and Timothy rejoin Paul. **First Thessalonians** was written from here in about 52 AD (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2, 6). We know that it was written from Corinth, and not from Athens, because Silas and Timothy had already rejoined Paul (1 Thessalonians 1:1 and Acts 18:5). **Second Thessalonians** was also written from Corinth. We know that it was soon after the first letter, because like the first letter, Silas was with Paul when second Thessalonians was written. After Paul leaves Corinth, there is no further mention of Silas traveling with Paul.

Paul left by boat with Aquila and Priscilla to Cenchræa and then across the Aegean Sea to Ephesus. Aquila and Priscilla stay there where they would later meet Apollos (Acts 18:19 and 26).

Paul sails on to Caesarea and then goes up to Antioch in Syria, where the **second journey ends**. Paul stayed a while (Acts 18:23). This may have been the winter of 53-54 AD.

**The third journey begins** with Galatia (central region of Turkey) possibly in the spring of 54 AD and then Phrygia (Acts 18:23).

Then Paul arrives at Ephesus where he stayed for **3 years** (Acts 20:31) probably from the fall of 54 AD to the fall of 57 AD. Paul meets disciples of John the Baptist. He preached in the synagogue for **3 months** (Acts 19:8). He disputed daily in the school of Tyrannus for **2 years** (Acts 19:9-10), so that

all that dwelt in Asia heard the word. Paul sent Timothy and Erastus ahead into Macedonia, but Paul stayed in Asia for **a season** (Acts 19:22). Paul wrote **1 Corinthians** near the end of this stay in Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:8,19), probably in 57 AD. It was not written with Timothy, who Paul had sent ahead into Macedonia (Acts 19:22). Paul foresaw his route of travel for the next four or so years in Acts 19:21-22. This agrees with his plans in 1 Corinthians 16:1, 3, 5, 8-10. Note how the "*great door*" opened to Paul and "*many adversaries*" in verse 9 compares with the events in the Ephesian amphitheater in Acts 19:23-41. In 1 Corinthians 3:6, Paul says "*Apollos watered*". This refers to Apollos teaching in Corinth when Paul was at Ephesus (Acts 19:1).

Paul had rejoined Timothy when Second Corinthians was written (2 Corinthians 1:1). Paul had come to Troas and continued to Macedonia (2 Corinthians 2:12-13 and 7:5), where he was joined by Titus (2 Corinthians 7:6 & 13), which seems to correspond to Acts 20:1. Paul also talks of a **third visit to Corinth** in 2 Corinthians 13:1 and 12:14. So **Second Corinthians** was most likely written in the fall of 57 AD from somewhere in Macedonia (northern Greece), possibly at Philippi.

In 2 Corinthians 12:1-4, Paul says **14 years ago** I ascended into heaven. From 57, going back 14 years to 43 AD, this puts us back before Paul's first journey, probably when he was at Antioch in Syria.

After going through Macedonia (northern Greece), Paul came to Achaia (southern Greece) where he stayed **3 months** (Acts 20:2-3), making **third visit to Corinth**. This is where he spent the winter of 57-58 AD (1 Corinthians 16:5-8). **Romans** was written at this time (Rom 15:23-26 and 1 Corinthians 16:1-3).

Going back to Macedonia (Acts 20:1), they were at Philippi (northeastern Greece) in spring of 58 AD in the "*days of unleavened bread*" (Acts 20:6).

Then they sailed to Troas, where a young man fell out of a window, and Paul raises him from the dead (Acts 20:7-12).

Then Paul went to Assos, Mitylene, Chios, Samos, Trogylium, and Miletus (now in southwestern Turkey). From here, Paul addresses Ephesian elders whom he had called to meet him (Acts 20:17-38) in the spring of 58 AD (Acts 20:16).

Sailing to Coos, Rhodes, Patara, and passing on the south side of Cyprus, they came to Tyre (which is now in Lebanon) where they stayed one week. Then they went south to Ptolemais and to Caesarea where they stayed many days (Acts 21:10). Then Paul goes to Jerusalem, where the third journey ends.

Here let us pause to look at the question: When was **Galatians** written? Galatians was written when Paul was not in prison and when neither Silas or Timothy were with him (Galatians 1:1). It was written after the council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-32 and Galatians 2:1-10) and after Paul's second visit to the region on his second journey in about 51 AD (Acts 16:1-6). Since they were "*so soon removed*" from grace (Galatians 1:6), it must have been before the prison years of 58-63 AD. So it could have been written when Paul was alone in Athens in the winter of 51-52 AD, which would make it Paul's first letter. But this is unlikely, since Paul was only in Athens a short time (Acts 17:15). Or it could have been written from Antioch between Paul's second and third journeys in the winter of 53-54 AD (Acts 18:22-23). But this is also unlikely because Paul would have probably

mentioned that he would be coming to them soon on his third journey. It could have been written from Corinth in the winter of 57-58 where Paul wrote Romans. But most likely, it was written from Ephesus during Paul's 3 years there from 54-57. Paul had recently passed through the region of Galatia "... *strengthening all the disciples ...*" (Acts 18:23) and spent far more time in Ephesus where he could have gotten the unfavorable report about the churches in Galatia (Galatians 1:6) which was relatively nearby.

**The third journey ends** at Jerusalem in **58 AD**. Paul is beaten by Jews, preaches to them (Acts 22:1-21), and is brought before Sanhedrin. Jesus Christ tells Paul that he will go to bear him witness in Rome. Many Jews vow to kill Paul (Acts 23:12).

In **58 AD**, Paul is taken to Governor Felix (reigned 53-60) at Caesarea, "*many years*" (Acts 24:10) after 53 AD and 2 years before end Felix's reign. Paul then spends 2 years in prison in Caesarea in Judea.

In **60 AD**, Governor Portius Festus reign begins. Paul appeals to Caesar (Acts 25:11).

Some days pass, then Herod Agrippa II hears Paul.

**The voyage to Rome begins:** Paul, still a prisoner, sails to Sidon with Luke and Aristarchus (Acts 27:1-2) on the way to Italy.

They sailed to Myra (now southern Turkey) and on to Lasea, on large island of Crete, 50 miles southeast of Greece, where much time was spent (Acts 27:7-13).

In the **fall of 60 AD**, they reached Melita, a small island south of Sicily. Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake but lived. Paul healed the father of Publius and others. Paul (still captive) spends the winter of 60-61 AD (Acts 28:11) on island with his captors .

In the spring, they sailed on to Syracuse (on island of Sicily), then to Rhegium (on the southern tip of Italy), then to Puteoli (on the western coast of Italy).

**The voyage to Rome ends:** Paul spends **2 years** in his own hired house (Acts 28:30) as a prisoner in Rome from **61-63 AD**. During this time he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. In about 62 AD, Paul wrote **Ephesians** before Timothy came to him (Ephesians 1:1) while in prison in Rome (Ephesians 3:1, 4:1, and 6:20). Also in about 62 AD, Paul wrote **Philippians** from prison (Philippians 1:7) in Rome (4:23) with Timothy (1:1). Paul wrote **Colossians** from prison (Colossians 4:18) in Rome in about 62 AD with Timothy (1:1) and fellow prisoner, Aristarchus (4:10). Paul, with Timothy, wrote **Philemon** from prison in 63 AD (Philemon 1:1).

**Paul after the imprisonment in Rome:** We know that Paul had further journeys after he was released from the prison in Rome in 63 AD. After his release, he wrote the epistles of Hebrews, Titus, First Timothy, and Second Timothy, not necessarily in that order, although Second Timothy was apparently his last. This took place after the events recorded in Acts, so all of our information comes from various statements that Paul makes in his letters. In them are clues that Paul may have traveled to some or all of the following places: **Colosse, Spain, Corinth, Miletus, Troas, Crete, Nicopolis, Philippi, Italy, Judea, Ephesus, and Macedonia**. This allows for the possibilities that Paul traveled to more about as many diverse places as in all of his previous journeys combined.

There are probably several possible ways that one could reconstruct the sequence of these travels which would not disagree with scripture. Since I do not know which one would be correct, I will just list what I know about the journeys. Thus, the references below are not intended to be chronological, although they all occurred after Paul's release from prison in 63 AD.

In Philemon 22, Paul foresaw his release and tells those in **Colosse** to prepare him lodging. We know that Philemon was written to the Colossians because of Archippus (Colossians 4:17 and Philemon 2), Onesimus (Colossians 4:9 and Philemon 9-10), and others (Colossians 4:10-14 and Philemon 23-25). Also, while in prison in Rome Paul wrote to those in **Philippi** that he may be coming to visit them (Philippians 1:26).

In Romans 1:10, 15:24 and 28, and 16:1, 3, and 5 Paul speaks of aspirations of eventually going to **Spain**. Did he ever do this in his final years? The Bible does not say whether he did or not. We do however have the account of the century author, Clement of Rome, regarding Paul. "After preaching both in the east and west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to **the extreme limit of the west**, and suffered martyrdom under the prefects" (The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, Chapter 5). The "extreme limit of the west" very well could be Spain.

At some time after being released from the prison in Rome, Paul went to **Corinth** and **Miletus** (2 Timothy 4:20). He also went to **Troas** (2 Timothy 4:13), **Crete** (Titus 1:5), and **Nicopolis** for the winter (Titus 3:12).

Paul leaving Titus in Crete must have been during a period of liberty after Paul's imprisonment in Rome ended in 63 AD. Paul did not go there during the first 3 journeys. There is no mention of Titus or of any preaching on Crete in Acts 27:7-13, on the voyage to Rome. Paul says he will send Artemas or Tychicus to Titus. He tells Titus to come to Nicopolis where Paul has determined to winter (Titus 3:12). The letter to **Titus** was probably written around 64-65 AD. There are three cities called Nicopolis: (1) in Achaia (southern Greece), most likely the one to which Paul was referring, (2) 15 miles west of Jerusalem, and (3) in the area that is now Romania.

The book of **Hebrews** was apparently written from **Italy** (Hebrews 13:24). Timothy had been released from prison (Hebrews 13:23) and was coming to Paul. Paul was apparently at liberty as well, since they planned to then go to visit the Hebrews. This could have been in **Judea**, as Paul says, "... *ye had compassion of me in my bonds* ..." (Hebrews 10:34). This must have been in reference to Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea from 58-60 AD. Hebrews was probably written around 64-65 AD.

Paul had told Timothy to stay and teach in **Ephesus** when Paul went to **Macedonia** (1 Timothy 1:3). During the third journey, Paul had done the opposite, staying in Ephesus himself, and sending Timothy with Erastus to Macedonia (Acts 19:22). So **First Timothy** was written around 64-65 AD during a period of liberty after Paul's Roman imprisonment of 61-63 AD. Paul said he was hoping to come to Timothy in Ephesus shortly, but may have to tarry long (1 Timothy 3:14-15). Timothy was in Ephesus where he received both First Timothy and Second Timothy (1 Timothy 1:3, 2 Timothy 1:16-18, 4:14, 4:19, Acts 19:33, and 1 Timothy 1:20).

**Second Timothy** was apparently written from prison (2 Timothy 1:8) with Paul ready to die (2 Timothy 4:6-8), possibly about 66 AD. Yet he asks Timothy to come to him before winter (2 Timothy 4:9 and 21). Paul was probably martyred sometime around 67 AD.

[Home Page](#) \* [Copyright Policy](#) \* [Feedback](#)

Copyright © 1998 Matthew McGee. All rights reserved.