

A CHRONOLOGY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

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INTRODUCTION

Any attempt to reconstruct a chronology for the events in the life of Paul must admit to some degree of approximation, though we can "come close" to dating most events of the Apostle's life. In reviewing the scholarship of others, two key decisions have strong bearing on most everything else. The first is the date that one presumes for the crucifixion of Christ. For the purposes of this study, I will follow the commendable work of Harold Hoehner and use the date of AD 33 for our Lord's death.¹ The second is the date of Paul's ministry at Corinth. Acts 18:12 mentions that Paul was brought before Gallio who was proconsul of Achaia (lower Greece). The year of his office was from early summer of AD 51 to early summer of AD 52. Thus, Paul's stay in Corinth had to overlap with the administration of Gallio. Although most scholars agree on this date for Gallio, they differ over the exact years that Paul was in Corinth. Had Paul recently arrived in Corinth when Gallio took office, or was he already near the conclusion of his Corinthian ministry (which lasted at least 18 months – Acts 18:11)? Hence, some will date Paul's arrival in Corinth as early as Dec AD 49, while others will date it in the spring of AD 51. Most attempts to reconstruct a chronology for Paul's life will be made as a result of working backward and forward from the date of Paul's time in Corinth. This accounts for a slight difference of a year or two in most chronological schemes.

Inevitably, one must also make certain assumptions on other matters. The fourteen years mentioned in Gal 2:1 for Paul's 2nd Jerusalem visit are probably to be understood as fourteen years from the time of his conversion rather than fourteen years from the 1st Jerusalem visit mentioned in Gal 1:18 (so Carson, 362). Also, most *time periods* should probably be understood on the basis of "inclusive dating" (whereby a portion of a year would be counted as a full year). This is the common understanding of most scholars. Finally, we have to ask the question, to which visits recorded in Acts do the two visits mentioned in Galatians correspond? I assume that Paul's 2nd Jerusalem visit for the purpose of famine relief (Acts 11:30; Gal 2:1) is distinct from Paul's visit to Jerusalem for the "Jerusalem Council" (Acts 15), and that Paul wrote Galatians before the Jerusalem Council (contra Finegan, but agreeing with Carson, 361).

In addition to my own personal studies, I have received much help from class notes that I received from Dr. Harold Hoehner, whom I was privileged to study under many years ago. For the most part, I will use the dates that he has suggested. Yet, I have also benefited from the work of Carson and Moo in their New Testament

¹ Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1977). Finegan concurs with the date of AD 33 for Christ's crucifixion (Jack Finegan, "The Death of Jesus," in *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, rev. ed. [Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1998], 353-69). Carson and Moo acknowledge that the AD 33 date is possible, but see the AD 30 date as "slightly preferable" (D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2d ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 2005]: 126-27).

Introduction (hereafter referred to as "Carson"), as well as from the outstanding work of Jack Finegan.² These are the three primary sources used in this study, and I will make notations where they differ from one another.

In the notes which follow, I will organize the life of Paul according to three distinctive periods in his life: (1) the Formative Period prior to his missionary journeys; (2) the Missionary Period up to his final visit to Jerusalem; and (3) the Imprisonment Period from his arrest until his eventual martyrdom.

A. FORMATIVE PERIOD (14/15 years: summer AD 34/35 – spring 48)

This covers the period from Paul's conversion in AD 34/35 up to the beginning of his first missionary journey.

1. At Jerusalem

- a. Witnesses the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58)
- b. Participates in the persecution of the Jerusalem church (Acts 8:1-4)
- c. Receives authority from the High Priest to go to Damascus to persecute Christians (Acts 9:1-2)

2. Experiences at Damascus

AD 34/35

- a. Confronted by Jesus on the Damascus Road and converted³ (Acts 9:3-8; 22:5-11; 26:12-18)
- b. Ministered to by Ananias of Damascus (Acts 9:9-19; 22:12-16)
- c. Initial testimony at Damascus (Acts 9:19-22; 26:20)
- d. Departure to Arabia⁴ (Gal 1:16-17), which probably occurs between Acts 9:22 and Acts 9:23

² D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, "Paul's Missionary Career and Its Chronology," in *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 359-70; and Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*. Cf. Dale Moody, "A New Chronology for the Life and Letters of Paul," in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos: Nativity and Chronological Studies Presented to Jack Finegan*, ed. Jerry Vardaman and Edwin M. Yamauchi, 223-40 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989).

³ Hoehner dates Paul's conversion at AD 35, while Carson (368) dates it to AD 34/35. Finegan (395), however, dates it at AD 36, but he is dating the 14 years of Gal 2:1 back from AD 49 (he dates Galatians after the Jerusalem Council).

⁴ There is debate as to what is meant by "Arabia." LaSor writes, "Paul speaks of going to 'Arabia' after his Damascus experience (Gal. 1:17), which has been taken to refer to (1) the region E of Damascus, or (2) that S of Damascus, or (3) Mt. Sinai. He includes Sinai in Arabia in Gal. 4:25 , following the classical view of *Arabia Petrea* ; but this is hardly sufficient evidence to decide the location of his postconversion visit. King Aretas, elsewhere identified as an Arabian (cf. Josephus Ant. xiv.1.4), is mentioned in 2 Cor. 11:32 , and we are reasonably certain that he is to be identified with Aretas IV, king of the Nabateans, whose kingdom extended E and S of Damascus, with its capital at Petra" (Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1979-

- e. Return to Damascus (Gal 1:17)
- f. Attempt to kill Paul by Jews during the reign of Aretas IV⁵ (Acts 9:23-25; 2 Cor 11:32-33)

Summer 37

3. Return to Jerusalem (3 yrs after conversion – Gal 1:18)

- a. Befriended by Barnabas (Acts 9:26-28)
- b. Stays 15 days with Peter and visits with James (Gal 1:18-19)
- c. Hellenistic Jews attempt to kill Paul (Acts 9:29)

4. Departure to Tarsus

Christians bring Paul to Caesarea and send him off to Tarsus. There he ministers in the regions of Syria and Cilicia (Acts 9:30; Gal 1:21-24). Note: During Paul's tenure in Syria-Cilicia, Peter is used to initiate the inclusion of Gentiles in the church (Acts 10–11).

5. Activities at Antioch

- a. Church at Antioch develops from persecution that arose in connection with Stephen (Acts 11:19)
- b. The Jerusalem church sends Barnabas to investigate the activities of Antioch (Acts 11:22)
- c. Barnabas goes to Tarsus and returns with Paul to conduct intensive teaching ministry (Acts 11:25-26)

Spring 43?

Note: Herod Agrippa I initiates a persecution against Christians and has James the apostle killed. Peter is freed, and Agrippa is struck by God in AD 44 (Acts 12). Note that the details recorded in Acts 11–12 may not be in strict chronological order, so that the events of 11:27-30 (including the famine) may be after Agrippa's death. Acts 12:25 would then resume the story of Paul. So Carson, 367.

Autumn 47

6. 2nd Jerusalem Visit [= famine-relief visit] Carson (367) dates as AD 45-47.

- a. During the great famine of Claudius' reign (AD 41-54), Paul and Barnabas send a contribution for the relief of the brethren in Judea (Acts 11:27-30; Gal 2:1-10).⁶

1988], s.v. "Arabia," by W. S. LaSor, 1:221). Carson (363) equates Arabia more generally with "the Nabataean kingdom, northeast of the Dead Sea."

⁵ Aretas IV reigned as king of the Nabataeans from ca. 9 BC until AD 40.

⁶ Josephus (*Antiquities* 20.2.5) makes reference to a severe famine in AD 45 or 46.

- b. Titus accompanies them on the mission (Gal 2:1)
- c. Paul submits his gospel to "those who were of reputation" (Gal 2:2)
- d. James, Peter and John confirm Paul's gospel, and Titus is not compelled to be circumcised (Gal 2:3-10)
- e. Paul and Barnabas contact Barnabas' cousin, John-Mark, and bring him with them back to Antioch (Acts 12:25)

B. THE MISSIONARY PERIOD (9 years: Apr 48 – May 57)

April 48

- 1. **First Missionary Journey** (Apr 48 – Sept 49)⁷
 - a. Holy Spirit calls Barnabas and Paul to a special work (Acts 13:2)
 - b. John-Mark accompanies them (Acts 13:5)
 - c. Paul, Barnabas, and Mark minister at Cyprus, Barnabas' home (Acts 13:4; cf. Acts 4:36)
 - d. The three men leave Cyprus and sail to Perga in Pamphylia of Asia Minor (Acts 13:13)
 - e. John-Mark deserts them and returns to Jerusalem where his mother lived (Acts 13:13; 15:38; 12:12)
 - f. Paul and Barnabas continue on to Pisidian Antioch where they minister for several weeks until Jews drive them out (Acts 13:14-50)
 - g. Paul and Barnabas go on to Iconium where they spend "a long time" until they are nearly stoned (Acts 13:51–14:5)
 - h. Paul and Barnabas minister at Lystra where Paul is severely stoned (Acts 14:6-20a)
 - i. Possibly, initial contact is made with Timothy, his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice at this time (Acts 16:1-2; 2 Tim 1:5; 3:11)
 - j. Paul and Barnabas preach at Derbe (Acts 14:20b-21)
 - k. The two apostles make a return trip through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, in which they appoint elders for every church (Acts 14:21-23)
 - l. A final word is given at Perga before departing from Attalia for Antioch (Acts 14:24-25)
- 2. **Report Back to Antioch** (Sept 49 – Apr 50)

⁷ Carson (364) says that the "best guess is about eighteen months" for the 1st missionary journey, and indicates (367) that it was either AD 46-47 or 47-48. Finegan (394) dates it to AD 47-48.

Sept 49

- a. Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch (Acts 14:26)
- b. The two make a full report to the church of their activities and the things God had done (Acts 14:26-28)

Autumn 49

- c. Peter visits Antioch and eats with Gentiles (Gal 2:11-12)
- d. Certain men from the church at Jerusalem are sent to Antioch by James to check things out (Gal 2:12)
- e. Peter stops eating with Gentiles and Barnabas is carried away by his hypocrisy (Gal 2:12-13)
- f. Paul confronts Peter openly about his inconsistency (Gal 2:14)
- g. Paul receives word that Judaizers have infiltrated the Galatian churches (1st missionary journey), discrediting his apostleship and perverting the gospel
- h. Paul writes Galatians, defending the true gospel of grace and his apostleship

Autumn 49

- i. The Jerusalem Council⁸ (3rd Jerusalem visit)
 - (1) Men from Judea teach at Antioch that circumcision is necessary for salvation (Acts 15:1)
 - (2) The brethren at Antioch send Paul and Barnabas to the elders at Jerusalem over the issue (Acts 15:2)
 - (3) Believers from the Pharisaic sect demand Gentile believers be circumcised and observe the Mosaic Law (Acts 15:5)
 - (4) The apostles and elders at Jerusalem rule on the matter and make clear that Gentiles are saved by grace and under no obligation to the Law (Acts 15:6-21)
 - (5) Letters are drawn up affirming the stance of the Jerusalem apostles; Judas-Barsabbas and Silas are sent back with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch where the decision is proclaimed (Acts 15:22-33)
 - (6) Possibly John-Mark returned with them to Antioch
- j. Paul and Barnabas teach and preach at Antioch (Acts 15:35)
- k. Paul and Barnabas have a falling-out over whether to take Mark with them on a return missionary trip (Acts 15:36-39)
- l. Barnabas and Mark sail for Cyprus (Acts 15:39)

⁸ Carson (367) dates the Jerusalem Council in AD 48; Finegan (394) puts it at early 49.

- m. Silas joins Paul for the 2nd missionary journey (Acts 15:40)

April 50

3. **Second Missionary Journey** (Apr 50 – Sept 52)⁹

- a. Syria-Cilicia – Paul and Silas minister to the churches of upper Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:41)

- b. Asia Minor

(1) Traveling by land, they come to Derbe (Acts 16:1)

May 50

(2) At Lystra, they meet with Timothy. Timothy teams with them (after being circumcised), and the three deliver the Jerusalem decrees throughout the Phrygian and Galatian regions (Acts 16:1-6)

(3) Paul meets Luke at Troas

Note the switch from "they" to "we" in the narrative at Acts 16:10.

July 50

(4) Paul has a vision in the night at Troas directing the men to Macedonia (Acts 16:7-10)

- c. Macedonia (upper Greece)

(1) Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke all proceed to Macedonia by way of Samothrace (Acts 16:11)

Aug–Oct 50

(2) Ministry at Philippi (Acts 16:12-40)¹⁰

(a) Lydia and a slave-girl believe

(b) Paul and Silas are beaten and thrown in prison

(c) Philippian jailer believes

(d) Paul and Silas are released upon basis of Roman citizenship

(e) Luke and Timothy remain at Philippi to care for church [Note that the "we" section pauses at Philippi].

Note: Apparently, Luke remains at Philippi for a long time, rejoining Paul near the conclusion of the 3rd missionary journey. The

⁹ Finegan (394) dates the start of the 2nd missionary journey in the early spring of AD 49. Carson (367) has it starting sometime in the summer or autumn of AD 48, and concluding in the late summer or autumn of AD 51.

¹⁰ Finegan (394) dates Paul's arrival at Philippi as autumn or early winter of AD 49 (but this is based on his dating of Paul's stay in Corinth).

"we" section picks up again at Acts 20:5 as Paul is passing through Philippi.

Nov 50 – Jan 51

- (3) Ministry at Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9)
- (a) Paul and Silas minister in synagogue (Acts 17:1-2), though probably in Thessalonica longer than three Sabbaths. See 1 Thess 2:9 and Phil 4:16.
 - (b) Paul teaches on eschatology (2 Thess 2:5)
 - (c) Jason is persecuted (Acts 17:5-9)
 - (d) Possibly Gaius and Aristarchus of Macedonia join Paul as traveling companions at Thessalonica (Acts 19:29; 20:4)
 - (e) The Philippians send a gift for Paul's needs more than once (Phil 4:15-16)
 - (f) Brethren send Paul and Silas away by night to Berea (Acts 17:10) [Though unstated, it is possible that Timothy and others went with them].

Feb 51

- (4) Ministry at Berea (Acts 17:10-15)
- (a) Paul ministers at a Jewish synagogue and many believe (Acts 17:10-12)
 - (b) If Timothy did not depart Thessalonica with Paul and Silas (see 3f above), he evidently rejoins them at Berea (Acts 17:14)
 - (c) After the difficulties initiated by Jews of Thessalonica, Paul departs Berea (Acts 17:13-14)
 - (d) Silas and Timothy remain at Berea after Paul's departure (Acts 17:15-16)

d. Achaia (lower Greece)

Spring 51

- (1) Ministry at Athens (Acts 17:16-34)
- (a) Paul sent word (by way of those who escorted him to Athens) for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible (Acts 17:15)
 - (b) Paul ministers at the synagogue, market-place and Areopagus (Acts 17:17,19)
 - (c) Silas and Timothy rejoin Paul at Athens (Acts 17:16; 1 Thess 3:1). [Although this is not stated in the Acts passage (17:16-34), it is implied by the statements in 1 Thessalonians 3].
 - (d) Timothy is sent back to Thessalonica to strengthen and encourage the believers, and find out about their faith (1 Thess 3:1-5). [Nothing is clearly stated about Silas. Although he may have made a separate journey to Macedonia, he probably went with Timothy, as they seem to have returned together (see Acts 18:5)].

March 51

- (e) Paul departed Athens bound for Corinth (Acts 18:1)
- (2) Ministry at Corinth¹¹ (Acts 18:1-18) – March 51 – Sept 52
 - (a) Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla, recently arrived from Rome (Acts 18:2)

Note: The Jewish expulsion from Rome (see Acts 18:2) probably took place during the year AD 49.¹²
 - (b) Paul begins his ministry in the synagogue (Acts 18:4)
 - (c) Silas and Timothy come from Macedonia and rejoin Paul at Corinth (Acts 18:5; 1 Thess 3:6; 2 Cor 1:19)
 - (d) Timothy reports that the faith of the Thessalonians is doing well (1 Thess 3:6-10)
 - (e) Paul then writes 1 Thessalonians in the name of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thess 1:1)

Summer 51

¹¹ The dating of Paul's ministry at Corinth is crucial for establishing a chronology of his ministry, because most scholars work backward and forward from these dates to establish the probable dates of other events in his life. The reason that Corinth is more crucial than other places is that we have a fixed date to work from. Acts 18:12 tells us that Paul was brought before the Roman proconsul of Achaia named Gallio. Corinth was the seat of administration for the province of Achaia, and the proconsul would serve a term of one year. Based on information from the "Delphi inscription," Finegan has demonstrated that Gallio must have begun his year of service in the "early summer, say May/June . . . of the year 51" (Finegan, 393; cf. Carson, 366, who places it from July of 51). So, we know for sure that Paul would have been in Corinth during this year of Gallio's service. Yet, trying to determine the starting point of Paul's time in Corinth is more difficult, as well as his length of stay. Regarding his length of stay, Acts 18:11 mentions that Paul settled there a year and six months. As Toussaint wisely notes, however, "The actual length of Paul's stay in Corinth is unclear because the 18 months (v. 11) may be dated from the time of Paul's vision (vv. 9-10) or it may include all of Paul's time in Corinth (from v. 5 on)" (Stanley Toussaint, "Acts," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament* [Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-85], 407). Finegan (393) assumes that Paul had been in Corinth 1 ½ years before seeing Gallio, and thus arrived in Corinth in about Dec of AD 49. Similarly, Carson (367) puts Paul's arrival in the spring of AD 49. But if the 1 ½ years includes the time following his appearance before Gallio (cf. Acts 18:18), then perhaps his arrival was later. Hoehner takes the latter approach, and dates Paul's arrival in the spring of 51. Carson (367) points out that that the Corinth event could have been any 18 month period (perhaps longer) between the spring of AD 49 and the autumn of AD 52.

¹² Acts 18:2 informs us that Aquila and Priscilla had "recently" come from Italy "because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome." Claudius, the Roman Caesar, reigned from AD 41-54. Finegan (393) convincingly demonstrates that the Jewish expulsion had to have taken place between Jan AD 49 and Jan AD 50. He writes, "This expulsion of Jews from Rome is presumably part of the same event described by Suetonius, who writes in his *Life of Claudius* (25): 'Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus (*impulsore Chresto*) he expelled them from Rome.' In his *Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, completed in 418, Orosius says that Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome in the ninth year of his reign, and gives as his sources both Josephus and Suetonius, choosing to quote only the latter. . . . The ninth year of Claudius was Jan 24, A.D. 49 to Jan 23, A.D. 50."

Note: The epistle was written: (1) to explain to them why he had not yet returned to Thessalonica to visit them (2:17-18); (2) to express his affection for them (3:10); (3) to meet a lack in the doctrinal knowledge of the Thessalonians (3:10; 4:13; 5:1-11); and (4) to correct some errors in daily living (4:1-12; 5:12-18).

- (f) Stephanas believes and is baptized by Paul (1 Cor 1:16), and apparently goes on to become an elder or pastor at Corinth (1 Cor 16:15)
- (g) Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believes, and Paul baptizes him (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor 1:14)
- (h) Erastus believes (Acts 19:22; Rom 16:23)
- (i) Paul receives a vision in the night from the Lord, encouraging him to continue on at Corinth (Acts 18:9-11)
- (j) Paul receives further word concerning the Thessalonians, and writes 2 Thessalonians

Summer 51

Note: This epistle was written: (1) to correct some misunderstanding regarding the Day of the Lord; and (2) to correct disorderliness and idleness in the church.

- (k) Sosthenes believes (1 Cor 1:1). He is called the "leader of the synagogue"—perhaps the Jews replaced Crispus with Sosthenes.
- (l) The Jews bring Paul before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, but Gallio throws the case out (Acts 18:12-16)
- (m) The Jews beat Sosthenes (Acts 18:17). Possibly he goes with Paul to Ephesus, since he is there with Paul at the writing of 1 Corinthians.

e. Return to Syria

Sept 52

- (1) Paul departs Corinth for Syria (Acts 18:18), accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla
- (2) Paul has his hair cut at Cenchrea (Acts 18:18). Possibly he meets Phoebe at this point (Rom 16:1-2)
- (3) Brief visit at Ephesus for the first time (Acts 18:19-21)
- (4) Ministers at the Ephesian synagogue; asked to stay, but requests to return (Acts 18:19-20)
- (5) Leaves Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus (Acts 18:19)

- (6) Paul sails to Caesarea (Acts 18:22)
- (7) Paul visits Jerusalem for the 4th time (Acts 18:22)
- (8) Travels to Antioch

4. **Reports Back to Antioch** (Acts 18:22)

Spr 53

5. **Third Missionary Journey** (Spring 53 – May 57)¹³

- a. Strengthens disciples in Galatian region and Phrygia (Acts 18:23)
- b. Apollos preaches at Ephesus, but returns to Corinth before Paul reaches Ephesus (Acts 18:24–19:1; 1 Cor 3:5-6)
- c. Paul's ministry at Ephesus (Acts 19:1–20:1) [Carson dates AD 52–55]

Sept 53 – May 56

- (1) Three month ministry in synagogue (Acts 19:8)
- (2) Paul teaches the disciples for two years in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9-10)
- (3) Possible that a man of Colossae, Epaphras, believes and brings the gospel to his town (Acts 19:10; Col 1:7; 4:12)
- (4) Possible that Erastus comes to Paul from Corinth (Acts 19:22; Rom 16:23)
- (5) Aquila and Priscilla apparently are still at Ephesus (1 Cor 16:19)
- (6) Apparently Apollos returns to Ephesus following his ministry in Achaia (Acts 18:27; 1 Cor 16:12)
- (7) The unrecorded visit

From his "base of operations" at Ephesus (three years at Ephesus – Acts 20:31), Paul made an "unrecorded" visit to Corinth. It is known Paul made this visit because the second visit recorded in Acts (Acts 20:1-2) is really the third visit of 2 Cor 12:14 and 13:1. This is evidently the sorrowful visit mentioned in 2 Cor 2:1; 12:21; and 13:2.

(8) The "lost" epistle

Paul then wrote an epistle which the church does not now possess (see 1 Cor 5:9). This "lost" epistle must follow the unrecorded visit inasmuch as 1 Cor 5:9-11 explains some of the contents of the lost epistle. If Paul had

¹³ Finegan (396) puts the close of the 2nd missionary journey in the spring or fall of AD 51, and dates the 3rd missionary journey beginning in the spring of AD 52 and lasting until May/June AD 55 (397). Carson (368) dates the 3rd missionary journey from the spring of AD 52 to AD 57.

visited them after he wrote the epistle, he most likely would have explained this point in person.

(9) The sending of Timothy and Erastus

Paul later sent Timothy to Corinth by way of Macedonia (1 Cor 4:17; 16:10-11; Acts 19:22). Timothy was to remind the Corinthians of Paul's teachings (1 Cor 16:10). It is doubtful that Timothy reached Corinth before the writing of 2 Cor. Acts 19:22 says Timothy went only as far as Macedonia. In 1 Cor 4:17 and 16:10-11, the coming of Timothy is still viewed as future, and in 2 Cor 1:1 he is with Paul in Macedonia.

Spring 56

(10) Paul writes 1 Corinthians¹⁴

After the departure of Timothy, saddening news concerning the church at Corinth reached Paul in Ephesus (1 Cor 1:11-12; 16:17). Paul wrote the epistle, and apparently it was carried by Titus (2 Cor 7:12-14).

Note: 1 Corinthians was written: (1) to deal with the problems at Corinth (factions, immorality, lawsuits) that had come to Paul's attention (1 Cor 1:11-12); (2) to answer some questions that they had written him about (1 Cor 7:1; 8:1; 12:1); (3) to deal with the abuse of spiritual gifts; and (4) to admonish the Corinthians to prepare for a collection upon his arrival (1 Cor 16:1-4).

(11) Paul intended to come to Corinth after he had gone through Macedonia, and perhaps even spend the winter there (Acts 19:21; 1 Cor 16:5-6).

(12) The riot at Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41)

(13) Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, Gaius (from Derbe – Acts 20:4) and Aristarchus (from Thessalonica – Acts 20:4) are arrested at Ephesus but shortly released (Acts 19:29).

(14) Paul departs Ephesus for Macedonia by way of Troas (Acts 20:1)

d. Macedonia and Greece

May 56

(1) Paul evidently agreed with Titus to meet him in Troas when Titus returned from Corinth. Titus was to report on the response of the Corinthian church

¹⁴ David Lowery dates 1 Corinthians at about AD 54-55 ("1 Corinthians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament* [Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-85], 505). Fee concluded, "The letter may be safely dated in the Spring (see on 16:8), ca. A.D. 53-55, depending on the time of Paul's departure from Corinth (Acts 18:18) and the length of his stay in Ephesus" (Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1987], 15).

to Paul's epistle. However, Paul could not find Titus in Troas (2 Cor 2:12-13).

(2) The finding of Titus

Paul then left the work in Troas and went to Macedonia, where he found Titus (2 Cor 7:5-7).

Sept/Oct 56

(3) Paul writes 2 Corinthians

When Titus told Paul of the repentance of the church, the apostle joyfully wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia (not all of the report, however, was joyful) (2 Cor 1:15-23; 10:10-12).

Note: Paul wrote 2 Corinthians: (1) to defend his change in plans (2 Cor 1:15-2:4); (2) to encourage the Corinthian church to receive the repentant brother back into fellowship (2 Cor 2:5-11); (3) to convey his love for them and the relief and joy at their response to his epistle; (4) to make final arrangements for the collection at Corinth (2 Cor 8:1-9:15); and (5) to defend himself against the attacks on his apostleship and ministry (2 Cor 10:1-13:10).

(4) Titus is sent on to Corinth ahead of Paul with another brother to make final arrangements for their bountiful gift (2 Cor 8:16-24; 9:5).

Nov 56

(5) Paul moved on from Macedonia into Greece, visiting Corinth as he had planned (Acts 20:2; 1 Cor 16:3).

(6) Paul stays with Gaius at Corinth (Rom 16:23)

(7) Timothy is with Paul at Corinth (Rom 16:21), as well as Lucius, Jason, Sosipater, Tertius, Gaius, Erastus (the city treasurer) and Quartus.

(8) Paul finds that the Corinthians have been faithful to prepare the contribution that he expected (Rom 15:26).

Winter 56/57

(9) Paul writes Romans

Note: Paul was presently bound for Jerusalem (Rom 15:25), but he had a great desire to see Rome and minister the gospel in the capital of the Gentile world (Rom 1:8-15). Since he could not come to Rome at the present time, he writes this beautiful doctrinal elucidation of the theology of the righteousness of God to men, including man's universal condemnation, God's solution in justification by faith, sanctification, a clarification of Israel's relationship to God, and duties that would be expected of the life of sanctification.

(10) At this point, Paul intends to take the gift of the Gentiles to Jerusalem, visit the Christians at Rome and go on to Spain (Rom 15:28)

(11) Possibly, Paul sends the epistle to Rome with Phoebe (Rom 16:1-2)

(12) After Paul left Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla moved back to Rome where a church met in their home (Rom 16:3-4; 1 Cor 16:19)

- (13) After three months in Greece, Paul makes a return trip through Macedonia (Acts 20:3)
- (14) Paul is accompanied by a large traveling party including Sopater of Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, Gaius of Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia (Acts 20:4).
- (15) Paul meets Luke again at Philippi (Acts 20:5-6; note the "we" section again)
- (16) Paul and Luke remain briefly at Philippi until the days of unleavened bread were complete while the others go on to Troas (Acts 20:5-6)

e. The Return to Jerusalem

- (1) The whole party meets again at Troas and heads for Jerusalem (Acts 20:6, 16). They are in a hurry to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost.
- (2) Paul addresses the Ephesian elders at Miletus (Acts 20:17-38)
- (3) Paul and companions arrive at Tyre and visit the disciples (Acts 21:3)
- (4) Paul visits with Philip the evangelist at Caesarea (Acts 21:8)
- (5) Agabus prophecies of Paul's imprisonment (Acts 21:10)

May 57

C. IMPRISONMENT PERIOD (11 years: May 57 – Spring 68)

Scope: This period follows the "missionary journeys" and deals with the imprisonments at Caesarea and Rome (twice), as well as the period of release.

1. Jerusalem to Caesarea

a. The arrest at Jerusalem

- (1) Paul arrives at Jerusalem (Acts 21:17)

Several people no doubt accompany Paul at this point, including Luke (Acts 21:17), Trophimus of Ephesus (Acts 21:29), and Aristarchus of Thessalonica (Acts 27:2).

- (2) Paul meets with James (the Lord's brother) and elders (Acts 21:18)
- (3) Paul is seized by the Jews in the Temple area (Acts 21:30)

Note: Finegan (397) dates Paul's arrest in the summer AD 55.

b. Trial at Jerusalem

- (1) Paul is tried before the Sanhedrin during the high priesthood of Ananias (Acts 23:2)
- (2) The Roman commander, Claudius Lysias, has Paul removed to Caesarea for Felix's review (Acts 23:23-35)

May 57

June 57

June 57

c. Trial before Felix (Acts 24)

- (1) Ananias (the High Priest) and Tertullus (the lawyer) bring charges against Paul (Acts 24:1ff)
- (2) Felix tables the case (Acts 24:22)
- (3) Paul's testimony before Felix and Drusilla (Acts 24:24)
- (4) Felix rules two more years and is succeeded by Porcius Festus¹⁵ (Acts 24:27)

July 59

- d. Trial before Festus
 - (1) Jews pressure Festus for a trial at Jerusalem (Acts 25:1-5)
 - (2) Festus hears the case at Caesarea (Acts 25:6ff)
 - (3) Paul appeals to Caesar (Acts 25:11)

Aug 59

- e. Paul's defense before Herod Agrippa II (Acts 25:23–26:32)

2. Journey to Rome

Note: According to Acts 27:9, the "fast" (i.e., the Day of Atonement) was over. So, this must have been in the fall of the year.

- a. Entrusted to Julius, a Roman centurion (Acts 27:1)
- b. Luke and Aristarchus accompany Paul on the ship (Acts 27:2)
- c. After departing from Sidon, they switch ships at Myra in Lycia (Acts 27:3-6)
- d. Shipwreck at Malta (Acts 28:1)
- e. Paul spends three months at Malta during which he heals the father of Publius (Acts 28:2, 11)

3. Under House Arrest at Rome

Feb 60

- a. Arrives at Rome (Acts 28:16)
- b. Aristarchus is imprisoned with Paul (Col 4:10)
- c. Two years spent at his own rented quarters (Acts 28:30)
- d. Paul has many of his companions spend time at Rome: Epaphras (Col 1:7-8; 4:12), Timothy (Col 1:1), Tychicus (Eph 6:21), Onesimus (Col 4:9), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25), Aristarchus (Col 4:10), Mark (Col 4:10), Luke (Col 4:14), and Demas (Col 4:14).

¹⁵ Finegan (399) dates the rule of Festus from the early summer of AD 57. Carson, however, points out "the growing consensus among scholars that Festus must have replaced Felix as governor of Judea in 59" (368). So, there is some uncertainty regarding the rule of Festus, and dates range from AD 55–60.

- e. Paul's imprisonment has a profound impact upon the whole praetorian guard (Phil 1:13).
- f. Epaphras (of Colossae) comes to Rome bringing word of the state of affairs at Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis (Col 1:7-8; 4:12-13)
- g. Epaphras is imprisoned with Paul (Philemon 23)
- h. Paul expects release (Phil 1:19,25; 2:24)
- i. Paul writes Ephesians from Rome

60-61

Note: Ephesus was Paul's major ministry (Acts 19-20). He writes this epistle to delineate the profound truth of the believer's position in Christ and the "walk" that should follow.

- j. Paul writes Colossians from Rome¹⁶

60-61

Note: Colossians was written following the report of Epaphras concerning heresy threatening the church. The epistle was written to correct false doctrine that arose from Judaism and incipient Gnosticism.

- k. Paul writes Philemon from Rome

Note: Philemon was a personal letter written to Philemon in intercession for his runaway slave, Onesimus, and may suggest guidelines on how Christian masters and slaves could live their faith within an evil system of slavery.

- l. Tychicus is sent to Ephesus and Colossae with the epistles from Paul (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7), accompanied by Onesimus who carries the epistle of Philemon (Philemon 12).
- m. Paul receives a financial gift from Philippi by means of Epaphroditus (Phil 4:18)
- n. Epaphroditus becomes almost fatally ill while with Paul (Phil 2:27)
- o. Paul writes Philippians from Rome

Spr 62

Note: Philippians was written in response to the gift that Paul received from them while imprisoned at Rome. The epistle expresses his thanks, informs them

¹⁶ In the BEE course on *Colossians*, the author suggests that Paul wrote both Colossians and Philemon around the year AD 55. He writes, "If this conclusion is correct, then the letter to the Colossians belongs to the period of intense evangelism and church planting which Paul and his coworkers carried out during his Ephesian ministry (see Acts 19:10)" ("Lesson 1 Appendices, The Historical Background of Colossians," in *Colossians* [Colorado Springs, CO: BEE World, Sept 2007]. See the appendix for arguments defending this theory. While this suggestion of AD 55 for Colossians and Philemon is possible, I will use the more traditional date in these notes. The weakness to the earlier date is the lack of evidence that Paul was imprisoned during his three-year stay in Ephesus.

of his circumstances, exhorts them to humility and unity, and urges them to follow Paul's example.

- p. Upon his recovery, Epaphroditus is sent to Philippi with the epistle (Phil 2:25-30)
- q. Later, Timothy is also sent to Philippi (Phil 2:19). He probably went on to Ephesus from there (1 Tim 1:3).
- r. Paul is released from Rome

4. Period of Release [the following sequence is only speculative]¹⁷

62

- a. Paul visits in Ephesus and Colossae (1 Tim 1:3)
- b. Paul ministers in Macedonia (1 Tim 1:3)

Aut 62

- c. Paul writes 1 Timothy from Macedonia

Note: Paul wrote 1 Timothy because of a possible delay in his arrival at Ephesus (3:14). Certain matters needed to be taken care of such as false doctrine in the church, leadership and administrative policies and practices.

64-66

- d. Paul returned to Asia Minor and Ephesus (1 Tim 3:14)
- e. Paul may have ventured to Spain (Rom 15:24, 28)—but there is no confirmation for this trip
- f. Paul returns to the east and visits Crete, leaving Titus in Crete (Titus 1:5)
- g. Paul ministers in Asia Minor

Sum 66

- h. Paul writes Titus

Note: Titus was written to remind him to set the work in order and appoint elders, to encourage the believers on Crete to godly living, to warn about false doctrine, and to ask Titus to come to Nicopolis.

Win 66/67

- i. Paul sends either Artemas or Tychicus to Crete (Titus 3:12)
- j. Paul spends the winter at Nicopolis where he is visited by Titus (Titus 3:12)
- k. Paul visits Corinth (2 Tim 4:20)
- l. Erastus remains behind in Corinth (2 Tim 4:20)

¹⁷ Carson (366) points out two considerations that would suggest Paul was released from Rome and had further ministry before being imprisoned again: (1) “apparently reliable early church accounts associate Paul’s death with Nero’s persecution of Christians in A.D. 64-65;” and (2) “the evidence of the Pastoral Epistles points to a period of further ministry in the eastern Mediterranean after the Roman imprisonment of Acts 28:30-31.”

- m. Paul visits Troas (2 Tim 4:13)
- n. Paul makes a final visit to Ephesus (2 Tim 1:18)
- o. Paul is possibly arrested in Asia (2 Tim 1:15)
- p. Paul boards a ship for Rome at Miletus, leaving Trophimus there in sickness (2 Tim 4:20)

5. Final Roman Imprisonment

Aut 67

- a. Paul is imprisoned in Rome for the final time and near death (2 Tim 1:8; 4:6)
- b. Demas deserts Paul and goes to Thessalonica (2 Tim 4:10)
- c. Crescens leaves Paul to go to Galatia (2 Tim 4:10)
- d. Titus leaves to go to Dalmatia (2 Tim 4:10)
- e. Luke remains with Paul at Rome (2 Tim 4:11)
- f. Onesiphorus comes to Rome and comforts Paul (2 Tim 1:16-18)
- g. Paul writes 2 Timothy

Aut 67

Note: Timothy was probably in Ephesus (2 Tim 1:16-18 and 4:19; 4:14-15 and Acts 19:33). The book of 2 Timothy was written to stimulate Timothy to have courage and faith, to withstand false doctrine, to choose faithful men for ministry, and to summon Timothy to Rome.

- h. Timothy comes to Rome before winter (2 Tim 4:21), bringing Paul's cloak and books from Troas (2 Tim 4:13), and is accompanied by Mark (2 Tim 4:11).
- i. Paul is martyred at Rome during the reign of Nero.¹⁸

Spring 68

¹⁸ Christian tradition says that Paul was martyred during the reign of Nero (r. AD 54 – June 9, 68). Carson (370) places Paul's death in AD 64-65, though Finegan (401) puts it as June 29, AD 67.