



Paul's Apostleship

As Seen In Damascus & Arabia

Galatians 1:15-17





-Remember, Galatians is divided up into three main sections:

- **Paul's Defense of His Apostleship** (Personal*) 1&2
- Paul Defends Justification by Faith Alone (Polemical*) 3&4
- Paul's Call to Liberty (Practical*) 5&6 *Lehman Strauss

-In 'Paul's Defense of His Apostleship', I've divided it up into six geographical sections in chapters 1&2:

-Introduction: Saul's Apostleship did not come by way of man. 1:11,12

1. In Tarsus and Jerusalem before Damascus. 1:13,14

2. In Damascus and Arabia. 1:15-17

3. In Jerusalem with Peter and James. 1:18-20

4. In Tarsus (Syria and Cilicia) apart from Judea. 1:21-24

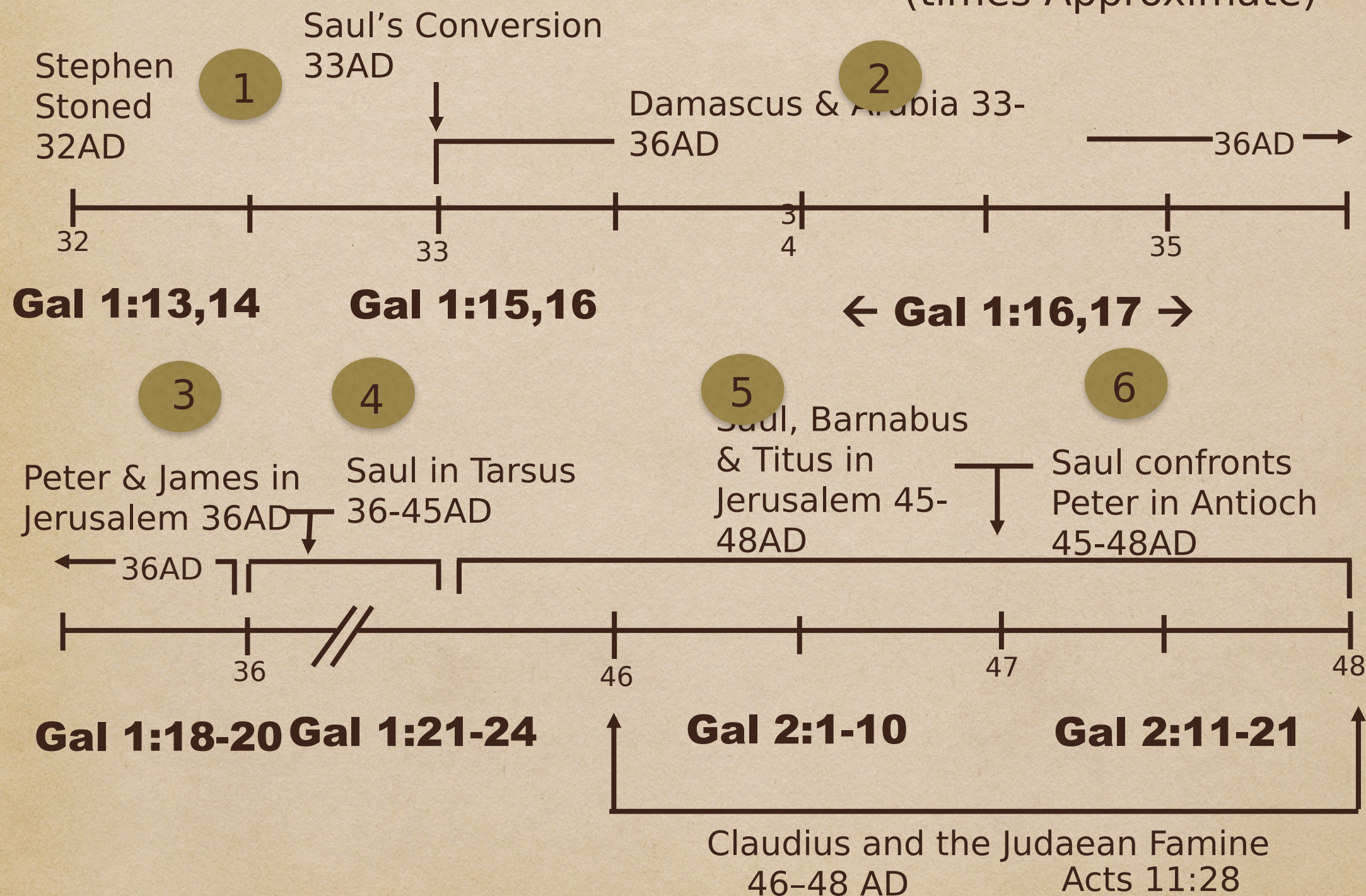
5. In Jerusalem with the pillars of the church. 2:1-10

6. In Antioch with Peter 2:11-21

Timeline of Galatians chapters 1 & 2



(times Approximate)





-Last week we dealt with Saul's life before he went to Damascus.

-Saul was building his career on the persecution, imprisonment, and the death of those in the church; "even pursuing them to foreign cities".

-Before he was saved, we would classify him as one of the most evil men in history.

-He was climbing the corporate ladder of Judaism on the bodies of the Christians he had imprisoned and murdered.

-We ended with This:

Acts 9:1,2 ¹Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, ² and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.



-Our passage today deals with Saul in Damascus and the Arabian desert. Galatians 1:15-17

¹³ For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; ¹⁴ and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

¹⁵ But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia and returned once more to Damascus.



-We are going to divide verses 15-17 into three separate sections:

I. Saul's Calling

II. Saul's Purpose

III. Saul's Action

I. Saul's Calling

1.15 But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and **called** me through His grace. . .

-Notice - Saul was called by God before he was ever saved.

-What exactly is meant by the 'calling of God'?

-The root word in Greek = Kaleo (καλέω) to call, summon, or invite.

-Speaking theologically, not scripturally, 'calling' can be broken down into two sub-categories; a **general call** and a **divine call**.



-A 'General Call' is when God, through a proclamation of scripture invites everyone to accept the free gift of Jesus Christ as their Savior. This is not what we are talking about in this verse.

-What we are talking about here is the technical meaning of the 'Divine Call' which we see in God's plan for every believer.

-This calling comes from God the Holy Spirit, not only in preparation at the point of salvation, but also the believer's justification and ultimate glorification.

-In Predestination, God calls only those who will believe.

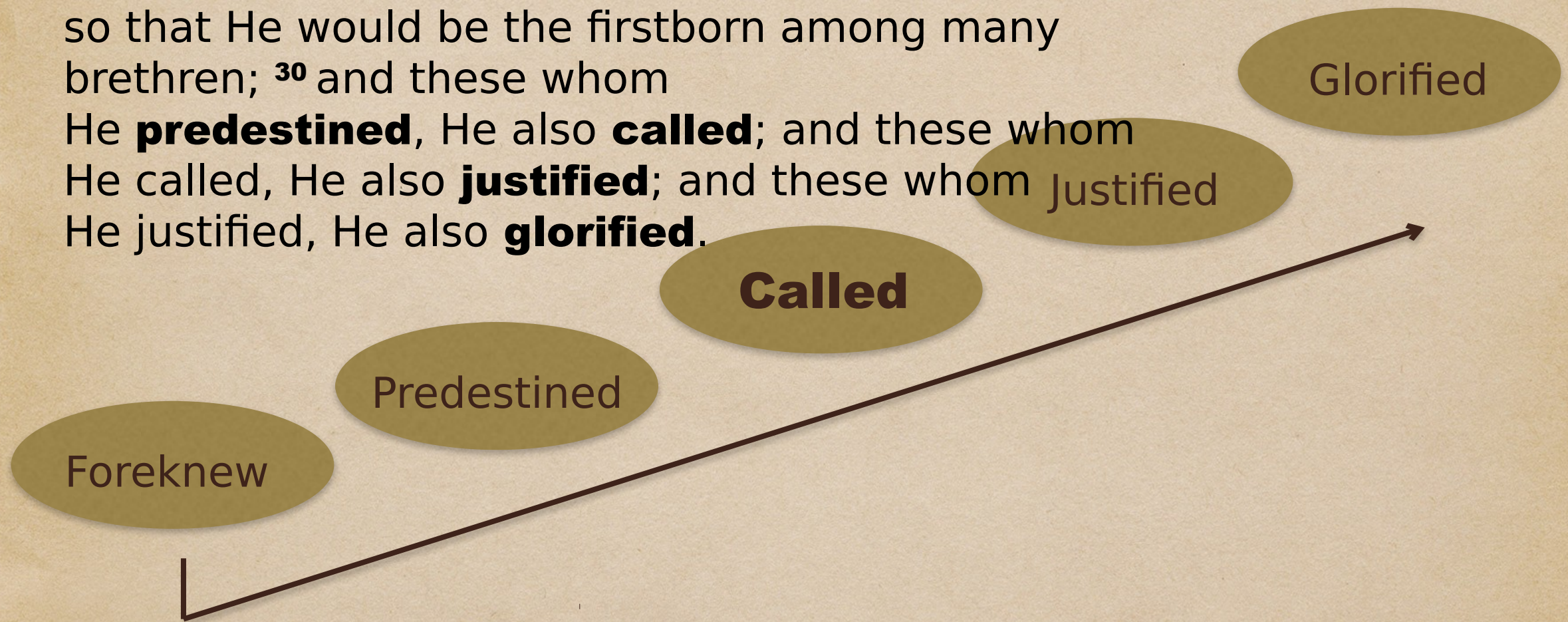
-In God's Omniscience, this Divine Call only goes out to those that He knows will put their faith in Christ.

-This can be seen in Romans 8:29,30



God's Election (Chosen, Called)

Romans 8: ²⁹ For those whom He **foreknew**, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He **predestined**, He also **called**; and these whom He called, He also **justified**; and these whom He justified, He also **glorified**.



The Chain of Predestination

Romans 8:29,30



-From a theological point of view; 'election', 'chosen', and 'called', are all synonymous terms when it comes to Predestination.
-If we were to put a human timeline on God's Predestination and Omniscience it would look like this:

-Foreknowledge and Predestination took place in eternity past.

-Calling and Justification takes place with the believer in time.

-Glorification takes place in eternity future.

-This calling is the work of the Holy Spirit towards only those who will believe.

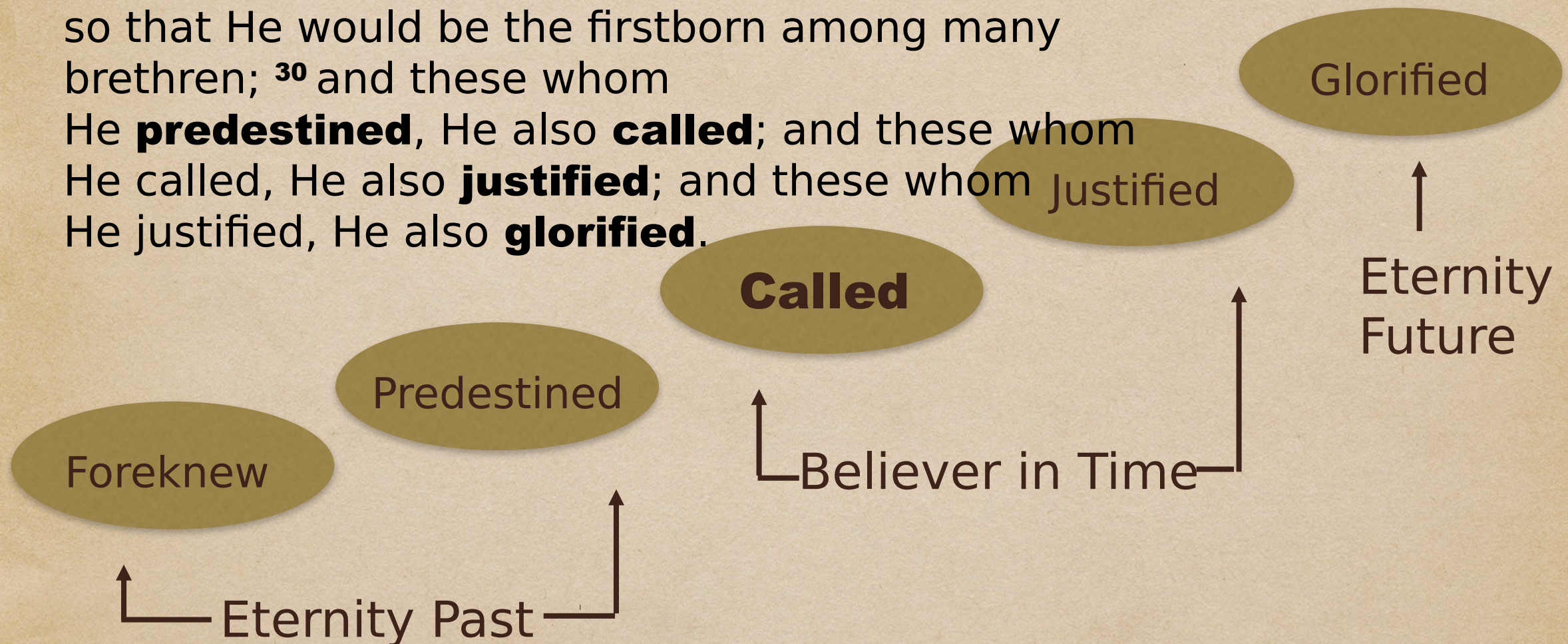
-Unbelievers are never a recipient of this call.

-Let's look at this chart once more, but this time working backwards:



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The Chain of Predestination

Romans 8:29,30



-So, if this calling is only effective for those who will believe, what is involved in our calling?

-We are not called to be saved, but as believers, we are called to be justified and ultimately glorified.

-The believer's calling can be summed up in Romans chapter 6:

Romans 6:3-5 ³ Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ J esus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection. . .

-It is further amplified in Ephesians chapters 1&2:



Every Believer is Called

Divine Calling Through God's Grace

Baptism by the
Holy Spirit

Eph 1:4 "Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him."

Positional Truth

Ephesians chapters 1&2

- In Christ we:
- Have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.
 - Are His workmanship created in Him.
 - are created unto good works.
 - Have the riches of the glory of His Inheritance.



-So many times we want to associate 'election', 'chosen', and 'calling', with the act of being saved.
-Some will say, we are elected to be saved and some aren't.

or;

-Some will say, we are chosen or called to salvation and others to hell.

-Do not mix up our **election** with our **volition** (our free will to choose or reject Christ).

-In the Divine Decrees of God, human responsibility has always co-existed with God's Sovereignty.

-God's Sovereignty and Justice will never override the free will of man.

-God created man with a free will when He placed "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" in the garden.



Genesis 2:16,17 ¹⁶ The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷ but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

-Our **salvation** is based on the finished work of Christ on the cross when we put our faith in the gospel.

-Our **calling** is based on God's predestining us "to become conformed to the image of His Son"

Romans 8:39

-Do we think that Saul, without prior knowledge of the gospel, just suddenly believed on that road to Damascus?

-Most likely, the Holy Spirit had been working on him as far back as Stephen's death; maybe even before that.

-In the message to the men on Mars Hill in Athens, Paul used the same reasoning that he heard Stephen use when witnessing to the Sanhedrin back in Acts 7.



Acts 7: 47,48 ⁴⁷ But it was Solomon who built a house for Him. ⁴⁸ However, the Most High does not dwell in *houses* made by *human* hands. (a reference to I saiah 66:12)

Act 17: 24 The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;

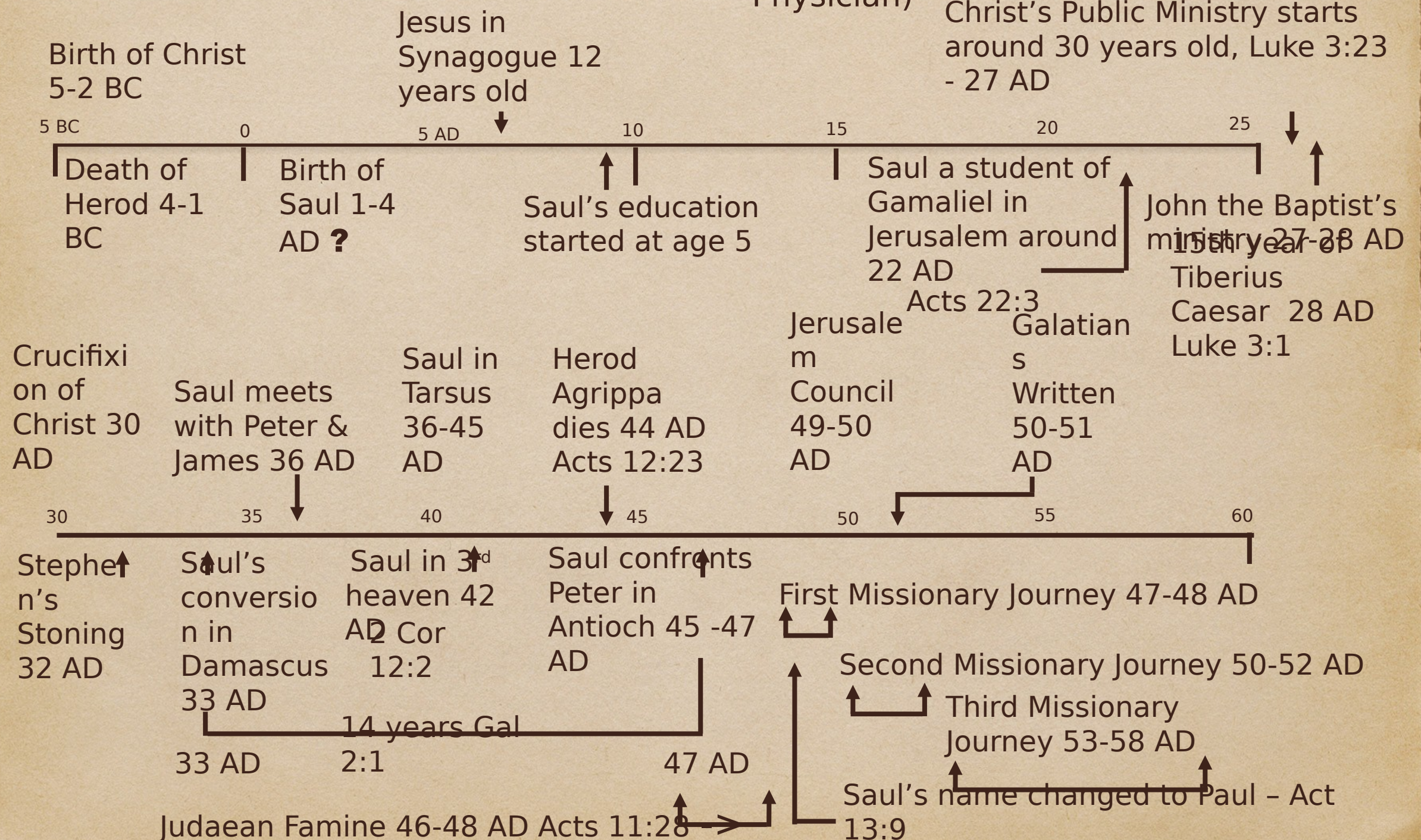
-Was using Stephen's words in Athens just a coincidence, or had the Holy Spirit been working on Saul back in Chapter 7?

-Saul was fully aware of the gospel; not only from Stephen's message but he was also aware of the apostles and probably the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

-Saul was in Jerusalem, with Gamaliel, at the time of Christ.

Timeline of Saul of Tarsus

(Dates approximate - based on
Flavius Josephus & Luke the
Physician)



-On the Damascus road Christ said, “why are you persecuting me?”; Saul, of his own free will, believed.



-God knowing this, called Saul, “even from *his* mother’s womb”, to a particular purpose.

II. Saul’s Purpose

Galatians 1:15,16 ¹⁵ But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, **was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles. . .**

-This calling was declared by the Lord to Ananias when he first met Saul in Damascus.

Acts 9:15,16 ¹⁵ But the Lord said to *[Ananias]*, “Go, for he is a **chosen** instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; ¹⁶ for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.”



-No other writer in all of scripture has revealed the person and work of Jesus Christ and His Church to the extent that Paul did.

-If it weren't for Paul's calling, we would know very little about the age that we live in, or our position in Christ.

-Even Peter, in his letters to the dispersed Jews in Asia Minor and Galatia, encouraged his readers to consider Paul's writings:

1Peter 3:15,16 ¹⁵ and consider *that* the long suffering of our Lord *is* salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, ¹⁶ as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand. . . .NKJ V

-Which brings us to our last point:



III. Saul's Action

-Now let's get back to the main context of chapters 1&2:

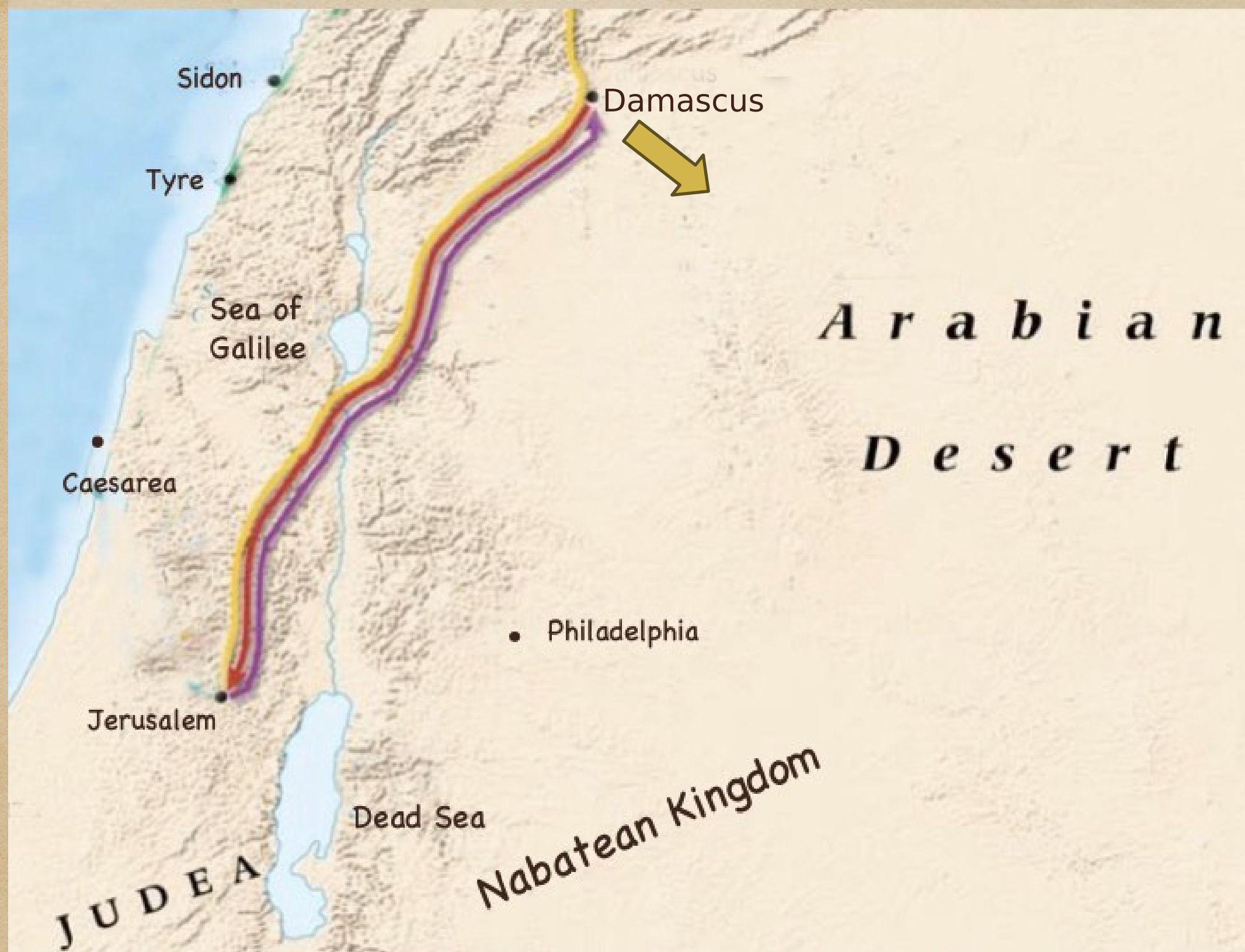
-Paul's defense of his apostleship.

-This is seen in his time spent in the Arabia desert.

Galatians 1:16,17 ¹⁵ But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called me through His grace. . . ¹⁶ I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia and returned *once more to Damascus.*

-It is apparent that between Saul's conversion, and his return to Damascus, he spent some time in Arabia.

-We're not talking about Saudi Arabia which is south of Judea, but the Arabian Desert, right next to Damascus.





-There appears to be a contradiction on when this trip to Arabia took place:

Acts 9:19,20 ¹⁹ and he took food and was strengthened. **Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, ²⁰ and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."**

Galatians 1:16,17 ¹⁶ **I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,** ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; **but I went away to Arabia** and returned once more to Damascus.

-The passage in Acts has Saul spending several days with the disciples and proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues.

-Our passage in Galatians has Saul ignoring all men and heading straight to Arabia.



- It should be noted that Paul and Luke are looking at this account from two different perspectives.
- Luke is a historian and as such will either include or leave out certain details of his historical narrative.
- Paul, on the other hand is giving evidence for his claim of apostleship apart from men.

-The book of Acts has no mention of Arabia, except it may have been alluded to when Barnabus introduced Saul to Peter and James in Jerusalem.

Acts 9:26,27 ²⁶ When he ^(Saul) came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. ²⁷ But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, **and that He had talked to him**, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.

-So, in fact, Saul did not “consult with flesh and blood” concerning his apostleship, but he did spend “several days” after his conversion with the disciples in Damascus, even going to the synagogues proclaiming Christ.



-Acts 9 goes on to say:

22 But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ.

23 When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him . .

24 but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death; **25** but his disciples took him by night and let him down through *an opening in the wall*, lowering him in a large basket.



-So, when exactly did Saul go to Arabia, and was it for three years?

Galatians 1:17,18 ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia and returned once more to Damascus. ¹⁸ Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem.

-Its obvious that Saul spent time in the Arabian desert during his stay in Damascus.

-The question is; did the three years in verse 18 refer to just Arabia, or the period from his conversion to Jerusalem.

-I refuse to give my opinion on that because I have now ventured into verse 18, which Miles will cover next week!

-But What Is Important In Today's Lesson?



-Saul solidified his apostleship in the Arabian Desert being taught directly by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatian 1:16,17 **16** I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood. . . **17** but I went away to Arabia.

-After Saul's conversion he met with other disciples, proclaimed Christ in the synagogues, and probably discussed spiritual things with them.
-But it was in Arabia that Christ trained him for his mission to the Gentiles. This most likely included:

- The mystery doctrine of the church
- The relationship between Jew and gentile
- The relationship between Law and Grace
- Our position in Christ

-This apostleship came directly from Christ, not man.



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