



Paul's Apostleship

Life Before Damascus

Galatians 1:13,14





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

I. Paul's Defense of His Apostleship (Personal*) 1&2

II. Paul Defends Justification by Faith Alone (Polemical*) 3&4

III. Paul's Call to Liberty (Practical*) 5&6 *Lehman Strauss

-Galatians is the first book written by Paul that the H.S. has included in the Word of God.

-As a result, Paul takes the time in this epistle to establish his apostleship; not only to the Galatians, but to everyone reading God's Word, including us.

-Last week we saw the introduction to Paul's apostleship in Galatians 1:11,12:

1:11,12 ¹¹For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but through a revelation of Jesus Christ.



-Paul will spend the next 33 verses (chapters 1&2) Defending not only his apostleship but his message of the gospel.

-He will do this in 6 different locations:

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 away from Judea (Syria and Cilicia). 1:21-24
5. In Jerusalem with the pillars of the church. 2:1-10
6. In Antioch with Peter 2:11-21

-This includes Paul's conversation with Peter concerning what justification is. 2:15-21

-Today we will look at Saul's life before Damascus. 1:13,14



Galatians 1:11-17

¹¹ For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but *I received it* through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

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.



“For you have heard. . .” 1:13a

-Everyone in Galatia had heard of Saul’s former life. The Judaizers would follow him from town to town making false accusations and denying his Apostleship.

In Pisidian Antioch - Acts 13:45 ; But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and *began* contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.

In Iconium - Acts 14:2 “But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against the brethren. . . .”

In Lystra – Acts 14:19 “But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. . . .”.



"My former manner of life in Judaism. . ." 1:13a

I. Who was this man Paul, formally named Saul?

Philippians 3:5 ". . . circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;"

A. "From the tribe of Benjamin"

- He was born a Jew of Jewish heritage.
- Born in the city of Tarsus in the Roman Province of Cilicia around 1 to 4 AD.



Tarsus

Jerusalem to Tarsus –
by land -570 miles – by
sea 355 miles

Located in the south-
western Province of
Cilicia

Depicted by
the arrow





"My former manner of life in Judaism. . ." 1:13a

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A. "From the tribe of Benjamin"

- He was born a Jew of Jewish heritage.
- Born in the city of Tarsus in the Roman Province of Cilicia around 1 to 4 AD.
- Cilicia was named after the abundance of 'cilicium' in the region. That's black goats' hair. Harvested from goats for making sacks, uniforms, covers, and tents.
- Which brings us to Saul's parents;



B. “A Hebrew of Hebrews”

- Saul’s parents had a tent making business using the black goats’ hair that was prevalent in Cilicia.
- They were Roman citizens, as was Saul.
- They were also Hebrews, not Hellenistic Jews.
 - Hellenistic Jews were Jews by birth, but had taken up the Greek lifestyle, customs, and language, deserting Jewish ways.
 - Saul’s family, while Roman citizens, still held to Abrahamic and Mosaic traditions.
- They followed the Torah, Jewish traditions, and education known as ‘the Chinuch’.



-Saul was sent off to Jerusalem to study under the tutelage of Gamaliel.

Acts 22:3 “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city *[Jerusalem]*, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today. ”

-Gamaliel was a respected Pharisee, a Jewish Law scholar, and a member of the Sanhedrin.

-Gamaliel was mentioned in Acts 5 warning the Sanhedrin against retaliating against the Apostles.

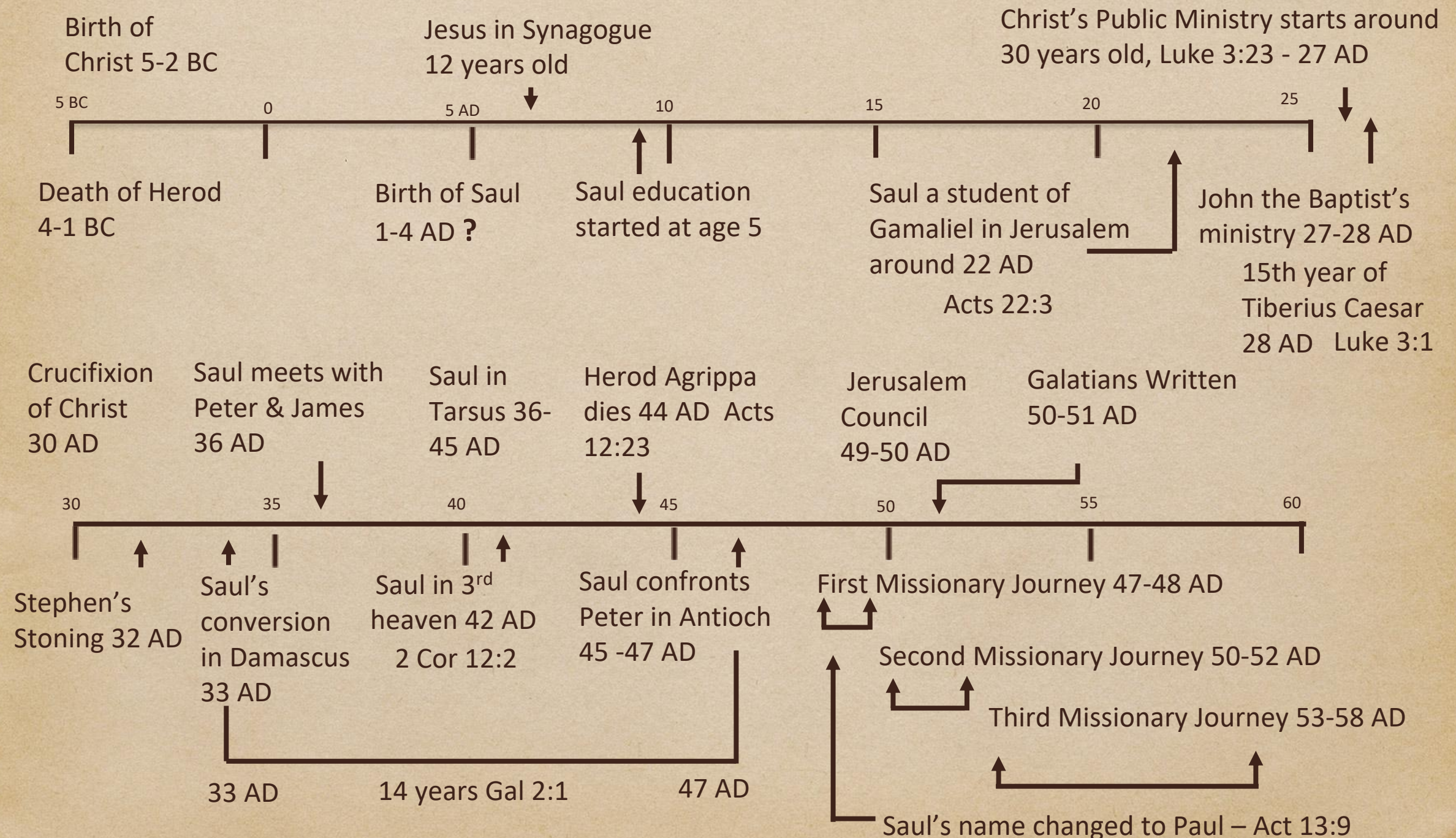
Acts 5:38,39 “. . .I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God.”

-Now would be a good time to check out Saul’s timeline;

Timeline of Saul of Tarsus



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





C. "As to the Law, a Pharisee" Phil 3:5b

- There were three major branches in Judaism at the time of Christ.
- The Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes.
- The Essenes** had a strict adherence to Jewish Law, emphasized ritual purity, and held to a monastic lifestyle.
- They flourished from 2 BC until the end of the 1st century.
- They professed belief in immortality but denied a bodily resurrection after death.
- They lived much like the hippy communes of the 1960's.
- They were never mentioned in the Bible and are best known for the Dead Sea Scrolls found in the caves of Qumran in 1947.



-The Sadducees were the Jewish priestly sect that controlled both the Temple sacrifices and the Sanhedrin. They were the wealthy aristocrats of Judaism.

-They began shortly after the Maccabean revolt in 2 BC when Israel regained the use of the temple in Jerusalem but faded away with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD.

-They held to the first five books of the Bible, the Torah, but denied the Oral Law.

-They denied the existence of angels, spirits, and the supernatural realm.

-They also denied the immortality and bodily resurrection after death.

That's why they were Sad-U-See



-**The Pharisees** were the prominent Jewish sect during Christ's earthly ministry and the early Church.

-They also emerged out of the Maccabean revolt around 150 BC and can be seen today as Hasidic and Rabbinic Jews.

-Unlike the Sadducees, they believed in a resurrection of the body and a future reward or punishment in the afterlife.

-This difference was clearly evident when Paul went before the Sanhedrin at his arrest in Jerusalem.

Acts 23:6 But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul *began* crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!"



-The Sanhedrin ignored Paul as the Pharisees and Sadducees turned against each other.

Acts 23:7-9 ⁷As he said this, there occurred a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. ⁸For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. ⁹And there occurred a great uproar; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and *began* to argue heatedly. .

-The dissension was so great the commander ordered Paul to be taken away.

Acts 23:10 And as a great dissension was developing, the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them and ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks.



-The Pharisees, as opposed to the Sadducees, believed that the traditions of the fathers, the Oral Law, was just as authoritative as the written Law, the Torah.

-What exactly is the Oral Law?-

-It all started when Israel was exiled to Syria and Babylon in 722 and 597 BC because of their disobedience to the Mosaic Law; particularly their disregard for the Sabbath rest for the land.

-When they were restored to the land in 538 BC, they vowed never to let this happen again.

-To accomplish this, they started making other laws so as to not break the Mosaic Law.

-These were called 'fences', or the Oral Law.



The Oral Law



TORAH The 613
commandments of
the Written Law

The First Fence:
Oral Tradition to
prevent breaking
the written Law

597 BC to 200 AD

The Second Fence:
The Mishnah

The Oral Law put
into writing
200 AD

The Third Fence: **The Amoraim**
Preservation of the Mishnah
Known as the Babylonian and
Jerusalem **Talmud**
200 – 500 AD

**Now there are thousands of
laws (Oral Traditions)**



-Instead of the 613 written laws, they ended up with thousands.

-Jesus was continually accused of breaking these Oral Laws while following the written Law of Moses.

-A good example of this is found in Mark 7 concerning the washing of hands before eating.

Mark 7:5 The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him *(Jesus)*, “Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?”

Mark 7:9 Jesus said, “You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition”.

Mark 7:13 Thus, invalidating the Word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that.



-Saul, as a Pharisee, did everything possible to gain the approval of God by means of his works and traditions.

Acts 26:4,5 “So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my *own* nation and at Jerusalem; since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I lived *as* a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion.

-And again, in Philippians 3:5,6 Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, and now: “**as to zeal, a persecutor of the Church**”

II. What was Saul’s mission before Damascus?

A. His goal was to destroy the church.

Gal 1:13b “how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it;”



-Our first encounter with Saul in scripture was at the stoning of Stephen;

Acts 7:58 When they had driven him out of the city, they *began* stoning *him*; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

Acts 8:1-3 ¹Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. . .³But Saul *began* ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

-Paul relates his actions at his arrest in Jerusalem:

Acts 22:4,5 ⁴I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, ⁵as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify.



-Then in Caesarea before Herod Agrippa II Paul said:

Acts 26:9-11 ⁹ I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death, I cast my vote against them. ¹¹ And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.

B. Saul became well known on this mission.

Gal 1:14a and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen,



-Saul was building his career on the persecution, imprisonment, and death of 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 murdered.

C. He thought he was pleasing God.

Gal 1:14b **being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.**

-Traditions can be bad if they are not grounded in the Word of God.

-Jewish traditions had been perverted by the oral law to the extent that they no longer resembled God's will.



-What can we learn about Saul's Apostleship in verses 13 and 14?

-In spite of his heritage, his education, his stature among his contemporaries, or his zeal for ancestral traditions:

-Nothing in his life qualified him to be an Apostle for Christ.

Gal 1:1 Paul, an apostle (not *sent* from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead). . .

Gal 1:11,12 ¹¹ For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but *I received it* through a revelation of Jesus Christ.



-Which now brings us to Damascus-

Acts 9:1,2 ¹Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, ²and 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.



-To Be Continued-

