

Paul The Apostle

Bible Study Monday 18th. May

The apocryphal “Acts of Paul & Thecla” tell us Paul was ‘unmarried, small in stature, bald, bandy legged, with a long nose and eyebrows meeting’ but as this is a bible study we will stick with the bible!

I will always call him Paul but he was Saul until he was in Paphos on his first missionary journey. He was from Tarsus, a Roman citizen (Acts22.17-29) and a Pharisee (Acts26.4-5) educated in Jerusalem (Acts22.3-4) and a tent-maker (Acts18.1-4)

From being a very conservative Jew and totally anti Christianity (Acts7.54 to 8.3) he was converted (Acts9.1-19) to become a preacher (Acts9.20-31) and a missionary (Acts 13.1-3) but more than just a missionary. Peter had opened the church to the Gentiles but Paul took on the job with great gusto and much of our theology comes from his writings rather than from the gospels. In a fortnight we will look at his theology but tonight we look at how long he took to get going and where he went on his first missionary journey.

When we read of Paul’s conversion in Acts 9.20-31 it appeared to be a bit hazy on timing; but the general impression is that it all happened quite quickly. Paul, writing to the Galatians, gives a longer version. After conversion he went off to Arabia (Gal.1.11-17) or even to Mt. Sinai as some manuscripts think Sinai is in Arabia (Ga.4.21-25). Three years later he went to Jerusalem to meet Peter & James (Gal.1.18-24). Fourteen years later he was in Jerusalem again (Gal.2.1-10) and then went to Tarsus where Barnabas found him to take him to Antioch ((Acts11.19-26) and there was another visit to Jerusalem (Acts11.27-30) and only then did the recorded missionary work begin.

How long do you think ministers today should wait before they start preaching and teaching? Would you set a different time line for missionaries?

On Paul's first missionary journey he is very interested in his fellow Jews, the Gentiles will come later even though he had agreed with Peter to concentrate on the Gentiles (Gal. 2.6-10).

Paul & Barnabas are a "pair" – just as Jesus sent out his disciples. Why do you think SPG & CMS & the C of E specialise in single appointments?

Starting from Antioch (Acts 13.1-3) he went to Seleucia (Acts 13.4) to Salamis (Acts 13.5) to Paphos (Acts 13.6-12).

Do you think this was the first time Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit? Do think this was a daily occurrence?

After Paphos, Perga (Acts 13.13) then Antioch-in-Pisidia (Acts 13.14) Iconium (Act 13.51) Lystra (Acts 14.6) and Derbe (Acts 14.20). Then all the way home, (Acts 14.21-25).

Now go back and read Peter's speech in Acts 10.34-43 and compare it with Paul's speech in Acts 13.13-41. What are the differences?