

MSB249

MORE Seed and Bread

BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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DATING THE EPISTLES OF PAUL

by Milton B. Hammond

This study will review the epistles written by the apostle Paul and give some insight into the dating and circumstances. Many theologians have worked on the dating of Paul's epistles throughout the years. Their study of the Scriptures has given us some excellent help in this quest, but most of them were unaware of God's insertion of the Dispensation of the Grace of God (Eph. 3:2), which took place with Paul's declaration in Acts 28:28. It says, **Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation** (*Gk. -soteria*, salvation bringing message) **of God is sent** (*Gk. -apostolos*, commissioned, sent with authority) **unto the Gentiles** (the nations), **and that they will hear it.**

Confusion may exist to the inquisitive Bible student unaware of this change, because Paul seemed to be sending conflicting messages in his earlier and later epistles.

Recognition of God's major change erases any conflict and clarifies Paul's messages. In the Acts Period Paul was expecting the immediate coming of Christ's Kingdom. But in the day of grace he knew he must wait for God's next move. In 2 Timothy 2:15 Paul exhorted Timothy to **Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.** "Rightly dividing the word of truth" means understanding Paul's words in the light of the dispensation in which they were written.

When Paul was converted on the road to Damascus (35 AD), Ananias was sent to heal his eyes. When he expressed fear of Paul, God gave him a message: **But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel** (Acts 9:15).

Paul visited Jerusalem, but it was in Antioch that the Holy Spirit spoke, **As they ministered and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them** (Acts 13:2).

Paul's first missionary journey (49-51 AD) is detailed in Acts 13 and 14. It covered locations on the island of Cyprus, and continued on into locations in Asia Minor, primarily in the province of Galatia. This encompassed Antioch in Pisidia, as well as Iconium, Lystra, Derbe and Perga. He was accompanied by Barnabas on this trip and he went to the Jews first and then to the Greeks (Hellenists) (Acts 13:46).

After Paul returned to Antioch in Syria, he went to Jerusalem (52 AD) to visit the elders of the out-called ones there and came back with a letter outlining what was expected of those Gentile believers (Acts 15:24-29). Here it states that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, sexual perversion, things strangled and drinking blood. They wrote these things because some of their own people had gone out and troubled the new converts, saying they had to be circumcised and keep the law. These men we call "Judaizers," and they were trying to lay burdens on the new believers that even the Jews had not been able to keep faithfully. Galatians 2:11-14 gives details on these people who opposed Paul and had even influenced Peter.

At Antioch in Syria, Paul took Silas, a Jewish believer from Jerusalem, with him, and Barnabas went with John to Cyprus. Paul and Silas, starting out on the second missionary journey (52-55 AD), went overland back to the out-called ones in Galatia, where at Lystra he circumcised Timothy, a Jew, and desired to have him accompany them.

The Lord then directed them over to Macedonia. Acts 16 tells of Paul in Philippi where he established a group of believers.

Chapter 17 tells of him going to Thessalonica where he attracted more believers, but unbelieving Jews drove him out.

Paul went to Berea, where the Jews followed, and he went down to Achaia, alone, leaving Timothy and Silas to preach in Macedonia.

Chapter 18 begins with Paul preaching in Corinth, where Timothy and Silas rejoined him, and where he stayed for a year and a half (Acts 18:11).

Paul was informed that the Macedonian believers were departing from his teaching and confused about his Kingdom message. Paul sent them two letters.

1) **1 Thessalonians**, written from Corinth, 53 AD, about Acts 18:5-7.

2) **2 Thessalonians**, written from Corinth, 54 AD, about Acts 18:11.

Paul then went with his associates by ship over to Ephesus where he preached in the synagogue a few weeks, traveling on to Caesarea and up to Jerusalem. Simultaneously Aquila and Priscilla, Paul's good friends, met Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew, a follower of John the Baptist. They explained to him the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom, and he went to Corinth to preach.

Paul then embarked on his third missionary journey (55 AD) again visiting the Galatians (1st journey). Acts 19 begins with Paul traveling on to Ephesus, preaching in the synagogue for three months, and moving to a Gentile place, when the Jews were not convinced. Galatians was written about this time, telling about the Judaizer's problems he had encountered there. Shortly after, he wrote 1 Corinthians admonishing the believers.

3) **Galatians**, written from Ephesus, 56 AD, about Acts 19:8.

4) **1 Corinthians**, written from Ephesus, 57 AD, about Acts 19:10.

Acts Chapter 20 begins with Paul leaving Ephesus, where he stayed three years (Acts 20:23).

He traveled to Macedonia, sending Timothy ahead. Here he wrote 2 Corinthians in preparation for a planned visit to them. He stayed for three months with the Corinthians and during that time he wrote the letter to the Romans. This epistle contains the most complete record of Paul's gospel message to the believers.

5) **2 Corinthians**, written from Macedonia, 58 AD, about Acts 20: 1-2.

6) **Romans**, written from Corinth, 58 AD, about Acts 20:3.

The unbelieving Jews were out to destroy Paul, so he returned by way of Macedonia, stopping at Troas and Miletum to preach encouragement to the believers from Ephesus. He then went by ship to Caesarea and then to Jerusalem. There he met with James and the elders of the out-called ones.

He reviewed his work among the nations, **And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord and said unto him, Thou seest brother, how many myriads (tens-of-thousands) of Jews there are which believe and they are all zealous for the law** (Acts 21 :20). Paul was accused of bringing a Gentile into the temple (Trophimus). There was a riot and the Romans took him into custody, but his trials could not establish any guilt.

I believe it was during these two years (Acts 24:27) spent in Caesarea that he wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews. These Jews had great need, for salvation is not by doing, but by believing as this letter says.

7) **Hebrews**, written from Caesarea, 60 AD, about Acts 24:27. This is the most mysterious of all Paul's epistles. First, he did not provide his usual form of address, and second, it does not contain a reference using his name as the author. He apparently had many enemies among the Jews and needed to remain anonymous.

Paul's prosecution and defenses are in Acts 22-26. He appealed to Caesar at his last trial, and was sent by ship to Rome with a soldier to guard him (61 AD).

Acts 27 details the events of this voyage and the shipwreck.

Acts 28 tells of his work with the natives on Malta healing the sick and his trip to Rome several months later. (62 AD).

In Rome he addressed the Jews' synagogue there, declaring the salvation of God was sent to the nations (Acts 28:28).

8) **Ephesians**, written from Rome, 62 AD, Acts 28:30-31. This letter should be called "the General Letter of Paul to the Saints." Paul was a prisoner but he had much freedom to teach the gospel to the Jews and among the emperor's servants. This letter is the first to identify the dispensational change to the present Day of Grace.

9) **Philippians**, written from Rome, 63 AD, Acts 28:30-31. This group of saints had first come into the truth over ten years earlier (Acts 16) and were confused by the change. Paul makes it very clear that the work of the Acts Period, heralding the Kingdom with its manifest gifts of the Holy Spirit, had been brought to a full end until the Day of *Jesus* Christ (Phil. 1:6).

Paul knew they needed his assurances and probably went to see them after 64 AD, and his release.

10) **Colossians**, written from Rome, 64 AD, Acts 28:30-31. This group had come to know Christ more recently, through the teaching of Epaphras. As new believers they had been saved within the newly established Day of God's grace.

11) **Philemon**, written from Rome, 64 AD, Acts 28:30-31. This short, very personal letter, was sent to notify Philemon, living in Colossae, that his runaway slave, Onesimus, had been of great help to Paul, and should be welcomed back as a brother in Christ.

12) **1 Timothy**, written from Greece (Macedonia, I Tim. 1:3), 65 AD. Paul wrote this letter to Timothy instructing him in the support and upholding of the saints not only in Ephesus but all around it.

13) **Titus**, written from Ephesus, about AD 66, Paul had gone to Ephesus, after leaving Titus in Crete (Tit. 1:5) to set in order the out-called ones. Paul requests Titus to come to Nicopolis (a winter retreat) bringing Zenas, the lawyer, and Apollos (Titus 3: 12-13).

14) **2 Timothy**, written from Rome, about 68 AD. This is Paul's last letter. After his release in 64 AD, he is once again imprisoned in Rome, but this time for a crime against Roman law. Paul says, **For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the**

good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith (2 Tim. 4:6-7). Several of his co-workers had left him and he says, **Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with you. . . .** (2 Tim. 4:11-13). Sadly, he relates, **Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick** (2 Tim. 4:19-20). Clearly, the miraculous healing powers he had in the Acts Period (Acts 19: 11-12) were no longer being manifest in this Dispensation.

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