

The Apostle Paul

- Born about 4 BCE and passed away approximately 62 – 64 CE in Rome
- Born in Tarsus of Syria as Saul. It was not uncommon in those days for a person to have two names. We do not know exactly when and how Paul became his primary name but we are certain Saul and Paul is the same person.
- He was a Greek speaking Jew and was well versed in Greek thought.
- He was born a citizen of Rome.
- Paul worked with his own hands – probably Tent Making.
- Was not a common laborer but probably not wealthy either.
- He could read and write and knew how to dictate.
- Paul wrote in Koine (Common) Greek rather than the elegant and sophisticated Greek of some others.
- He was taught scripture and the oral Torah by Gamaliel the grandson of Hillel.
- Gamaliel interestingly was a defender of the early believers in the divinity of Jesus.
- As a young man and future scholar he probably memorized the Hebrew Scriptures in whole or part.
- He quoted scripture from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures.
- Paul became a Pharisee well advanced in learning.
- Some people see Paul as arrogant. He freely said he was far more advanced in learning than other Pharisees and he felt the same as a follower of Jesus.
- As a Pharisee Paul believed in eternal life.
- Paul was a persecutor of believers in Jesus and probably urged synagogues to punish converts to the faith. This would have included ostracism and light flogging.
- He became a believer in the risen Christ somewhere around 33 CE.
- The common story is that Jesus appeared to him in some manner, perhaps a bright light, on the road to Damascus.
- Paul was dedicated, compassionate, emotional, clever, had a temper, and was completely dedicated to his mission for Jesus Christ.
- After Paul's conversion he went into Arabia (probably west of Damascus), and then returned to Damascus.

- After 3 years Paul met with Peter and James, Jesus' brother, for 15 days in Jerusalem. It was confirmed that Paul would take the good news to the gentiles and Peter and James would do the same with the Jews.
- Then after 14 years Paul returned to Jerusalem to compare theological understandings with the powers that be including Peter, James, and John. The purpose was to make sure the gospel he was preaching to the gentiles was approved by them. They agreed that gentiles need not take on the rules of Judaism in order to be true believers in the risen Christ. To Paul's chagrin they backtracked on this somewhat in a couple of cities.
- Paul wrote 7 letters which are printed in the New Testament. (Galatians, Romans, Philippians, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Philemon, 1st Thessalonians)
- Other letters attributed to Paul in scripture were written after his death by followers who may have had access to these and other letters he wrote.
- Paul was a missionary for Jesus Christ from the 30's through the early 60's.
- As a tent maker carrying a few leather tools he could set up shop anywhere and probably preached the gospel as he worked, eventually gaining enough converts to begin a community.
- Paul suffered for his leadership. Paul was often hungry and ill-clad. He was flogged at least five times, jailed, and arrested for taking a gentile too far into the Temple grounds. Since he was a Roman citizen he was eventually taken to Rome to stand trial.
- Paul wrote his letters to the congregations he had founded to answer questions and concerns that had arisen after his leaving. Often other missionaries had presented another "gospel" and Paul was compelled to refute their teaching. He did not return himself because he was moving constantly into new territory.
- The world around the Mediterranean was uniquely ready for Paul's ministry. The Romans made sure there was peace everywhere in the empire. There were good roads and one could also travel by ship. There was a common language, Greek. It is easy to see the hand of God working in the background.
- Paul's letters give us an entry into the world of the first Century that gospels cannot. They are therefore uniquely important to the serious student of the early church. In addition, these letters have formed the foundation for many a famous theologian.