

The Great Persecution (c. Spring–Summer 34)

Acts 8:1b–3	Acts 22:4, 19b	Acts 26:10–11a
<p>1b Now there happened on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.</p> <p>2 And devout men buried Stephen and made loud lamentation over him.</p> <p>3 But Saul was attempting to destroy the church. Entering house after house, he dragged off both men and women <i>and delivered them</i> to prison.</p>	<p>4 I persecuted this Way to the death,</p> <p>tying up and delivering to prison both men and women,</p> <p>19b from <i>synagogue to synagogue</i> I was imprisoning and beating those who believed in you.</p>	<p>10 which I also did in Jerusalem,</p> <p>and not only did I lock up many of the saints in prison, having received authority from the chief priests, but also <i>when</i> they were being executed, I cast <i>my</i> vote against <i>them</i>.</p> <p>11a And throughout all the synagogues I punished them often</p> <p><i>and tried to force them</i> to blaspheme,</p>

Philip's Ministry in Samaria (c. Summer 34)

Acts 8:4–25

The Great Persecution Serves to Spread the Gospel Message

4 Now those who had been scattered went about proclaiming the good news *of* the word.

Philip Preaches to the Samaritans

5 And Philip came down to the city of Samaria *and* began proclaiming the Christ to them.

6 And the crowds with one mind were paying attention to what was being said by Philip, *as* they heard *him* and saw the signs that he was performing.

7 For many of those who had unclean spirits, they were coming out *of them*, crying out with a loud voice, and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed.

8 And there was great joy in that city.

Simon the Magician

9 Now a certain man named Simon had been in the city practicing magic and astonishing the people of Samaria, saying he was someone great.

10 They were all paying attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called 'Great.'"

11 And they were paying attention to him because for a long time he had astonished them with *his* magic.

12 But when they believed Philip *as he* was proclaiming the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were being baptized.

13 And Simon himself also believed, and *after he* was baptized he was keeping close company with Philip. And *when he* saw the signs and great miracles that were taking place, he was astonished.

Peter and John Visit the Work in Samaria

14 Now *when* the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them,

15 who went down *and* prayed for them so that they would receive the Holy Spirit.

16 (For he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

17 Then they placed *their* hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

Peter Rebukes Simon

18 Now Simon, *when he* saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, offered them money,

19 saying, "Give to me also this power, so that whomever I place *my* hands on may receive the Holy Spirit!"

20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver be destroyed along with you, because you thought you could acquire the gift of God by means of money!

21 You have no part or share in this matter, because your heart is not right before God.

22 Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and ask the Lord if perhaps the intent of your heart may be forgiven you!”
 23 For I see you are in a state of bitter envy and bound by unrighteousness.”
 24 But Simon answered *and* said, “You pray to the Lord for me so that nothing of what you have said will come upon me.”
 25 So *when* they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they turned back toward Jerusalem, and were proclaiming the good news *to* many villages of the Samaritans.

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (c. Summer 34)

Acts 8:26–40

26 Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, “Get up and go toward the south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a desert *road*.)
 27 And he got up *and* went, and behold, *there was* a man, an Ethiopian eunuch (a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasury) who had come to worship in Jerusalem
 28 and was returning and sitting in his chariot, and reading aloud the prophet Isaiah.
 29 And the Spirit said to Philip, “Approach and join this chariot.”
 30 So Philip ran up to *it and* heard him reading aloud Isaiah the prophet and said, “So then, do you understand what you are reading?”
 31 And he said, “So how could I, unless someone will guide me?” And he invited Philip to come up *and* sit with him.
 32 Now the passage of scripture that he was reading aloud was this:

 “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
 and like a lamb before its shearer *is* silent,
 so he did not open his mouth.
 33 In his humiliation justice was taken from him.
 Who can describe his descendants?
 For his life was taken away from the earth.” [[Isa 53:7–8](#)]

 34 And the eunuch answered *and* said to Philip, “I ask you, about whom does the prophet say this—about himself or about someone else?”
 35 So Philip opened his mouth and beginning from this scripture, proclaimed the good news to him *about* Jesus.
 36 And as they were traveling down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?”
 37 [*verse not part of the original version of Acts*]
 38 And he ordered the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water—Philip and the eunuch—and he baptized him.
 39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him any longer, for he went on his way rejoicing.
 40 But Philip found himself at Azotus [*Ashdod*], and *as he* passed through, he proclaimed the good news *to* all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Saul’s (Paul’s) Call and Conversion Experience (late 34)

Acts 9:1–19a	Acts 22:6–16	Acts 26:12–18
<p>1 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 <i>and</i> asked for letters from him to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, both men and women, he could bring <i>them</i> tied up to Jerusalem. 3 Now as <i>he</i> proceeded, it happened that <i>when</i> he approached Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven</p>	<p>6 “And it happened that <i>as</i> I was traveling and approaching Damascus around noon, suddenly a very bright light from heaven</p>	<p>12 In this activity I was traveling to Damascus with the authority and full power of the chief priests. 13 In the middle of the day along the road, O king, I saw a light from heaven, more than the brightness of the sun,</p>

<p>flashed around him.</p> <p>4 And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”</p> <p>5 So he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he <i>said</i>, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting!</p> <p>7 (Now the men who were traveling together with him stood speechless, <i>because they heard the voice but saw no one.</i>)</p> <p>6 But get up</p> <p>and enter into the city, and it will be told to you what you must do.”</p> <p>8 So Saul got up from the ground, but <i>although</i> his eyes were open he could see nothing. And leading him by the hand, they brought <i>him</i> into Damascus.</p> <p>9 And he was unable to see <i>for</i> three days, and he did not eat or drink.</p> <p>10 Now there was a certain disciple in Damascus named Ananias,</p> <p>and the Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias!” And he said, “Behold, <i>here I am</i>, Lord!”</p> <p>11 And the Lord <i>said</i> to him, “Get up, go to the street called ‘Straight’ and in the house of Judas look for a man named Saul from Tarsus. For behold, he is praying,</p> <p>12 and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and placing hands on him so that he may regain <i>his</i> sight.”</p>	<p>flashed around me,</p> <p>7 and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”</p> <p>8 And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said to me, ‘I am Jesus the Nazarene whom you are persecuting.’</p> <p>9 (Now those who were with me saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me.)</p> <p>10 So I said, ‘What should I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Get up</p> <p><i>and</i> proceed to Damascus, and there it will be told to you about all <i>the things</i> that have been appointed for you to do.’</p> <p>11 And as I could not see as a result of the brightness of that light, I arrived in Damascus led by the hand of those who were with me.</p> <p>12 And a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who live <i>there</i>,</p>	<p>shining around me and those who were traveling with me.</p> <p>14 And <i>when</i> we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Aramaic language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? <i>It is hard</i> for you to kick against the goads!’</p> <p>15 So I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.</p> <p>16 But get up and stand on your feet, because for this <i>reason</i> I have appeared to you, to appoint you a servant and witness both <i>to the things</i> in which you saw me and <i>to the things</i> in which I will appear to you,</p> <p>17 rescuing you from the people and from the Gentiles to whom I am sending you,</p> <p>18 to open their eyes <i>so that they</i> may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, <i>so that</i> they may receive forgiveness of sins and a share among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’</p>
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<p>13 But Ananias replied, “Lord, I have heard from many <i>people</i> about this man, how much harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem, 14 and here he has authority from the chief priests to tie up all who call upon your name!” 15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, because this man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel. 16 For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” 17 So Ananias departed and entered into the house, and placing <i>his</i> hands on him, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me so that you may regain <i>your</i> sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 18 And immediately <i>something</i> like scales fell from his eyes and he regained <i>his</i> sight</p> <p>and got up <i>and</i> was baptized, 19a and <i>after</i> taking food, he regained his strength.</p>	<p>13 came to me and stood by <i>me and</i> said to me, ‘Brother Saul, regain <i>your</i> sight!’ And <i>at that</i> same time I looked up at him <i>and saw him</i>. 14 And he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know his will, and to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth, 15 because you will be a witness for him to all people of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now why are you delaying? Get up, be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name!’</p>	
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Saul Preaches Christ in the Damascus Synagogues (late 34)

Acts 9:19b–22

19b And he was with the disciples in Damascus several days.
20 And immediately he began proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues: “This one is the Son of God!”
21 And all who heard *him* were amazed, and were saying, “Is this not the one who was wreaking havoc in Jerusalem *on* those who call upon this name, and had come here for this *reason*, that he could bring them tied up to the chief priests?”
22 But Saul was increasing in strength even more, and was confounding the Jews who lived in Damascus *by* proving that this one is the Christ.

Saul’s Extended Residence in Damascus and Arabia (late 34–early 37)

Galatians 1:15–17

15 But when the one who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called *me* by his grace was pleased
16 to reveal his Son in me in order that I would proclaim the gospel *about* him among the Gentiles, immediately I did not 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 I returned again to Damascus.

Saul Narrowly Escapes Capture in Damascus (early 37)

Acts 9:23–25	2 Corinthians 11:32–33
<p>23 And when many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted to do away with him. 24 But their plot became known to Saul, and they were also watching the gates both day and night so that they could do away with him. 25 But his disciples took <i>him</i> at night <i>and</i> let him down through the wall <i>by</i> lowering <i>him</i> in a basket.</p>	<p>32 In Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to take me into custody, 33 and I was lowered through a window through the wall in a rope-basket, and I escaped his hands.</p>

Saul's First Post-Conversion Visit to Jerusalem (early 37)

Acts 9:26–29	Galatians 1:18–20
<p>26 And <i>when he</i> arrived in Jerusalem, he was attempting to associate with the disciples, and they were all afraid of him, <i>because they</i> did not believe that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him <i>and</i> brought <i>him</i> to the apostles and related to them how he had seen the Lord on the road and that he had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus. 28 And he was going in and going out among them in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. 29 And he was speaking and debating with the Greek-speaking Jews, but they were trying to do away with him.</p>	<p>18 Then after three years [<i>from his conversion</i>] I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and I stayed with him fifteen days, 19 but I did not see <i>any</i> others of the apostles except James, the brother of the Lord. 20 (Now <i>the things</i> which I am writing to you, behold, <i>I assure you</i> before God that I am not lying.)</p>

Saul's Ministry in Tarsus (his hometown in the province of Cilicia) (c. 37–46)

Acts 9:30	Galatians 1:21–24
<p>30 And <i>when</i> the brothers found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.</p>	<p>21 Then I came to the regions of Syria and of Cilicia, 22 but I was unknown in person to the churches of Judea <i>that are</i> in Christ, 23 and they were only hearing, "The one formerly persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith that formerly he was attempting to destroy," 24 and they were glorifying God because of me.</p>

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Chronological Notes

- 1) My chronological framework for the life of the apostle Paul follows Carson & Moo / Kostenberger for the period of 33 to 49 (both place Paul's conversion c. 34), and Kostenberger / Finegan for the period of 49 to 67 (both place Paul's arrest in Jerusalem c. 55).¹ I differ from Steinmann / Finegan over the identification of Galatians 2:1–10 with the council of Acts 15 (the current

¹ D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament—Second Edition* (Zondervan, 2009): 359–369; Andreas J. Kostenberger, L. Scott Kellum, Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown* (B&H Academic, 2009): 397–403; Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, Rev. Ed., (Hendrickson Publishers, 1998): 390–402.

majority view).² I prefer to connect Galatians 2:1–10 with the famine visit of Acts 11.³ In support of this view are the following points from Marshall⁴ and Schnabel:⁵

- A) Galatians 2:1–10 is a private meeting, not a public one as in Acts 15.
 - B) Galatians 2:1–10 is connected to a revelation, which best corresponds to Agabus' prophecy of the coming famine in Acts 11:27–28.
 - C) If Galatians 2:1–10 is equivalent to Acts 15, then Paul left unmentioned the famine visit of Acts 11:27–30. This makes no sense in light of Paul's intent in providing the autobiographical detail in Galatians 1–2.
 - D) Peter's fear of the men from Jerusalem in Galatians 2:11–14 makes no sense if the incident occurred *after* the Council of Acts 15.
 - E) Why, if writing to the Galatians *after* the Council of Acts 15, did Paul make no mention of the decision which had been reached? This makes no sense in light of the fact that when he returned to the Galatian churches on his second missionary trip, he made a point of sharing the decision with them (see Acts 16:4).
- 2) On the dating of Paul's escape from the "ethnarch" (*ethnarches*, 2 Cor 11:32–33; cf. Acts 9:23–25) of King Aretas, see Douglas A. Campbell, "An Anchor for Pauline Chronology: Paul's Flight from 'The Ethnarch of King Aretas' (2 Corinthians 11:32–33)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121.2 (2002): 279–302. Campbell argues for a six month window between late 36 and early 37 for Paul's escape. Steinmann agrees, but argues for a larger window between 36 and 38, mainly due to his view that Galatians 2:1–10 is equivalent to Acts 15.⁶

² Andrew E. **Steinmann**, *From Abraham to Paul*, 306–320. See also Moises **Silva**, *Interpreting Galatians*, 129–139.

³ I find myself in good company: Richard N. **Longenecker**, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 41 (Dallas: Word, 1990): lxxiii–lxxxviii. See also Stanley D. **Toussaint**, "The Chronological Problem of Galatians 2:1–10," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 120:480 (Oct 1963): 335–340; Paul R. **Trebilco**, "Itineraries, travel plans, journeys, apostolic parousia," in *Dictionary of Paul & His Letters*, G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin and D. G. Reid eds. (Downers Grove, Illinois, Inter-Varsity Press, 1993): 446–456; Joe **Morgado**, Jr., "Paul in Jerusalem: A Comparison of His Visits in Acts and Galatians," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37.1 (March 1994): 55–68; David J. **Downs**, *The Offering of the Gentiles: Paul's Collection for Jerusalem in Its Chronological, Cultural, and Cultic Contexts* (Mohr Siebeck, 2008): 33–39; Thomas R. **Schreiner**, *Galatians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2010): 28–29; Ronald Y. K. **Fung**, *Galatians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Eerdmans, 1988): 86; Ben **Witherington** III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians*, (Eerdmans, 1998): 13–18; Timothy **George**, *Galatians*, New American Commentary (Broadman & Holman, 1994): 136–137; F. F. **Bruce**, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Paternoster, 2002): 43–56.

⁴ I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary Vol. 5, (Sheffield Academic Press, 2003): 258–262.

⁵ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Volume 2, Paul and the Early Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004): 988–89.

⁶ Steinmann, 301–303.