

The Great Persecution (c. Spring–Summer 34)

Acts 8:1b–3	Acts 22:4, 19b	Acts 26:10–11a
<p>1b And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.</p> <p>2 <i>Some</i> devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him.</p> <p>3 But Saul <i>began</i> ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.</p>	<p>4 “I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons,</p> <p>19b in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You.</p>	<p>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. 11a And as I punished them often in all the synagogues,</p> <p>I tried to force them 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 Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.

Philip Preaches to the Samaritans

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

6 The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.

7 For *in the case of* many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out *of them* shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed.

8 So there was much rejoicing in that city.

Simon the Magician

9 Now there was a man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great;

10 and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, “This man is what is called the Great Power of God.”

11 And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts.

12 But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.

13 Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.

Peter and John Visit the Work in Samaria

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

15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

16 For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

17 Then they *began* laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.

Peter Rebukes Simon

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

19 saying, “Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.”

20 But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!

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

22 Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.

23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity.”
 24 But Simon answered and said, “Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.”
 25 So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (c. Summer 34)

Acts 8:26–40

26 But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, “Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a desert *road*.)
 27 So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship,
 28 and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah.
 29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go up and join this chariot.”
 30 Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?”
 31 And he said, “Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.
 32 Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this:

“HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER;
 AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT,
 SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH.

33 “IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY;
 WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION?
 FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH.” [[Isa 53:7–8](#)]

34 The eunuch answered Philip and said, “Please *tell me*, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?”
 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.
 36 As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?”
 37 [And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”]
 38 And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.
 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing.
 40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, [*Ashdod*], and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities 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 Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, 2 and 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. 3 As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus,</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him;</p> <p>4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice</p>	<p>6 But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me,</p> <p>7 and I fell to the ground and heard a voice</p>	<p>12 While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, 13 at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. 14 And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying</p>

<p>saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”</p> <p>5 And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He <i>said</i>, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, 7 The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.</p> <p>6 but get up</p> <p>and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.” 8 Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. 10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias;</p> <p>and the Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” 11 And the Lord <i>said</i> to him, “Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, 12 and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight.” 13 But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; 14 and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your</p>	<p>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.’ 9 And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me. 10 And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Get up</p> <p>and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.’</p> <p>11 But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus.</p> <p>12 A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, <i>and</i> well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there,</p>	<p>to me in the Hebrew dialect, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ 15 And 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; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; 17 rescuing you from the <i>Jewish</i> people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, 18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.’</p>
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<p>name.” 15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; 16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.” 17 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 18 And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; 19a and he took food and was strengthened.</p>	<p>13 came to me, and standing near said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very time I looked up at him. 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 an utterance from His mouth. 15 For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. 16 Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.’</p>	
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<p style="text-align: center;">Saul Preaches Christ in the Damascus Synagogues (late 34)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Acts 9:19b–22</p>	
<p>19b Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, 20 and immediately he <i>began</i> to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.” 21 All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, “Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and <i>who</i> had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?” 22 But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this <i>Jesus</i> is the Christ.</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;">Saul’s Extended Residence in Damascus and Arabia (late 34–early 37)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Galatians 1:15–17</p>	
<p>15 But when God, who had set me apart <i>even</i> 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.</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;">Saul Narrowly Escapes Capture in Damascus (early 37)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Acts 9:23–25</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2 Corinthians 11:32–33</p>
<p>23 When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him, 24 but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death;</p>	<p>32 In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me,</p>

25 but his disciples took him by night and let him down through <i>an opening in the wall</i> , lowering him in a large basket.	33 and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and so escaped his hands.
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Saul's First Post-Conversion Visit to Jerusalem (early 37)

Acts 9:26–29	Galatians 1:18–20
<p>26 When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple.</p> <p>27 But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.</p> <p>28 And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem,</p> <p>speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.</p> <p>29 And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic <i>Jews</i>; but they were attempting to put him to death.</p>	<p>18 Then three years later [<i>from his conversion</i>] I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas,</p> <p>and stayed with him fifteen days.</p> <p>19 But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.</p> <p>20 (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you 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 But when the brethren learned <i>of it</i>, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.</p>	<p>21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.</p> <p>22 I was <i>still</i> unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ;</p> <p>23 but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy."</p> <p>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 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

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.

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.

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

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.