

The Great Persecution (c. Spring–Summer 34)

Acts 8:1b–3	Acts 22:4, 19b	Acts 26:10–11a
<p>1b Now on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were forced to scatter throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.</p> <p>2 Some devout men buried Stephen and made loud lamentation over him.</p> <p>3 But Saul was trying to destroy the church; entering one house after another, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.</p>	<p>4 I persecuted this Way even to the point of death,</p> <p>tying up both men and women and putting them in prison,</p> <p>19b I imprisoned and beat those in the various synagogues who believed in you.</p>	<p>10 And that is what I did in Jerusalem:</p> <p>Not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons by the authority I received from the chief priests, but I also cast my vote against them when they were sentenced to death.</p> <p>11a I punished them often in all the synagogues and 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 Now those who had been forced to scatter went around proclaiming the good news of the word.

Philip Preaches to the Samaritans

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

6 The crowds were paying attention with one mind to what Philip said, as they heard and saw the miraculous signs he was performing.

7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud shrieks, were coming out of many who were possessed, and many paralyzed and lame people were healed.

8 So there was great joy in that city.

Simon the Magician

9 Now in that city was a man named Simon, who had been practicing magic and amazing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great.

10 All the people, from the least to the greatest, paid close attention to him, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called 'Great.'"

11 And they paid close attention to him because he had amazed them for a long time 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, they began to be baptized, both men and women.

13 Even Simon himself believed, and after he was baptized, he stayed close to Philip constantly, and when he saw the signs and great miracles that were occurring, he was amazed.

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 These two went down and prayed for them so that they would receive the Holy Spirit.

16 (For the Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

17 Then Peter and John placed their hands on the Samaritans, 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 me this power too, so that everyone I place my hands on may receive the Holy Spirit."

20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could acquire God's gift with money!

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

22 Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that he may perhaps forgive you for the intent of your heart.
 23 For I see that you are bitterly envious and in bondage to sin.”
 24 But Simon replied, “You pray to the Lord for me so that nothing of what you have said may happen to me.”
 25 So after Peter and John had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, proclaiming the good news to many Samaritan villages as they went.

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (c. Summer 34)

Acts 8:26–40

26 Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get up and go south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a desert road.)

27 So he got up and went. There he met an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship,

28 and was returning home, sitting in his chariot, reading the prophet Isaiah.

29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.”

30 So Philip ran up to it and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. He asked him, “Do you understand what you’re reading?”

31 The man replied, “How in the world can I, unless someone guides me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

32 Now the passage of scripture the man was reading was this:

*“He was led like a sheep to slaughter,
 and like a lamb before its shearer is silent,
 so he did not open his mouth.*

33 *In humiliation justice was taken from him.*

Who can describe his posterity?

For his life was taken away from the earth.” [Isa 53:7–8]

34 Then the eunuch said to Philip, “Please tell me, who is the prophet saying this about—himself or someone else?”

35 So Philip started speaking, and beginning with this scripture proclaimed the good news about Jesus to him.

36 Now as they were going along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look, there is water! What is to stop me from being baptized?”

37 *[verse not part of the original version of Acts]*

38 So he ordered the chariot to stop, and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

39 Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him any more, but went on his way rejoicing.

40 Philip, however, found himself at Azotus [*Ashdod*], and as he passed through the area, 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
1 Meanwhile Saul, still breathing out threats to murder the Lord’s disciples, went to the high priest		
2 and requested letters from him to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, either men or women, he could bring them as prisoners to Jerusalem.		
3 As he was going along, approaching Damascus,	6 As I was en route and near Damascus,	12 “While doing this very thing, as I was going to Damascus with authority and complete power from the chief priests,
suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.	about noon a very bright light from heaven suddenly flashed around me.	13 about noon along the road, Your Majesty, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining everywhere around me and those traveling with me.
4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him,	7 Then I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me,	14 When we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic,

<p>“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”</p> <p>5 So he said, “Who are you, Lord?” He replied, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting! 7 (Now the men who were traveling with him stood there speechless, because they heard the voice but saw no one.)</p> <p>6 But stand up</p> <p>and enter the city and you will be told what you must do.”</p> <p>8 So Saul got up from the ground, but although his eyes were open, he could see nothing. Leading him by the hand, his companions brought him into Damascus.</p> <p>9 For three days he could not see, and he neither ate nor drank anything.</p> <p>10 Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias.</p> <p>The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias,” and he replied, “Here I am, Lord.”</p> <p>11 Then the Lord told him, “Get up and go to the street called ‘Straight,’ and at Judas’ house look 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 place his hands on him so that he may see again.”</p> <p>13 But Ananias replied, “Lord, I have heard from many people 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 imprison all who call on your name!”</p> <p>15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, because</p>	<p>‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’</p> <p>8 I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ He said to me, ‘I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.’</p> <p>9 Those who were with me saw the light, but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me.</p> <p>10 So I asked, ‘What should I do, Lord?’ The Lord said to me, ‘Get up</p> <p>and go to Damascus; there you will be told about everything that you have been designated to do.’</p> <p>11 Since I could not see because of the brilliance of that light, I came to Damascus led by the hand of those who were with me.</p> <p>12 A man named Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who live there,</p>	<p>‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? You are hurting yourself by kicking against the goads.’</p> <p>15 So I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord replied, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.</p> <p>16 But get up and stand on your feet, for I have appeared to you for this reason, to designate you in advance as a servant and witness to the things you have seen and to the things in which I will appear to you.</p> <p>17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you</p> <p>18 to open their eyes so that they turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a share among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’</p>
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<p>this man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before Gentiles and kings and the people 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 the house, placed his hands on Saul and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came here, has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 18 Immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he could see again.</p> <p>He got up and was baptized, 19a and after taking some food, his strength returned.</p>	<p>13 came to me and stood beside me and said to me, ‘Brother Saul, regain your sight!’</p> <p>And at that very moment I looked up and saw him. 14 Then he said, ‘The God of our ancestors has already chosen you to know his will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear a command from his mouth, 15 because you will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on his name.’</p>	
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Saul Preaches Christ in the Damascus Synagogues (late 34)

Acts 9:19b–22

19b For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus,
20 and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “This man is the Son of God.”
21 All who heard him were amazed and were saying, “Is this not the man who in Jerusalem was ravaging those who call on this name, and who had come here to bring them as prisoners to the chief priests?”
22 But Saul became more and more capable, and was causing consternation among the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus 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 birth and called me by his grace was pleased
16 to reveal his Son in me so that I could preach him among the Gentiles, I did not go to ask advice from any human being,
17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before me, but right away I departed to Arabia, and then returned to Damascus.

Saul Narrowly Escapes Capture in Damascus (early 37)

Acts 9:23–25

2 Corinthians 11:32–33

23 Now after some days had passed, the Jews plotted together to kill him,
24 but Saul learned of their plot against him. They were also watching the city gates day and night so that they could kill him.
25 But his disciples took him at night and let him down through an opening in the wall by lowering him in a basket.

32 In Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to arrest me,
33 but I was let down in a rope-basket through a window in the city wall, and escaped his hands.

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

Acts 9:26–29	Galatians 1:18–20
<p>26 When he arrived in Jerusalem, he attempted to associate with the disciples, and they were all afraid of him, because they did not believe that he was a disciple.</p> <p>27 But Barnabas took Saul, brought him to the apostles, and related to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.</p> <p>28 So he was staying with them, associating openly with them in Jerusalem,</p> <p>speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.</p> <p>29 He was speaking and debating with the Greek-speaking Jews, but they were trying to kill him.</p>	<p>18 Then after three years [<i>from his conversion</i>] I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and get information from him,</p> <p>and I stayed with him fifteen days.</p> <p>19 But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.</p> <p>20 I assure you that, before God, I am not lying about what I am writing to you!</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 When the brothers found out about this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.</p>	<p>21 Afterward I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia.</p> <p>22 But I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.</p> <p>23 They were only hearing, "The one who once persecuted us is now proclaiming the good news of the faith he once tried to destroy."</p> <p>24 So they glorified 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. **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;

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

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.