

Responding to God Word: How to Faithfully Interpret the Bible

Men's Bible Study at Park View

A Study of the connection between the Acts and the Epistles of Paul

March 29, 2005

Both the book of Acts and the letters of Paul come to life in new ways when you study them side by side. In this week's study, we will discover new insights as we study several sayings from Paul's letters alongside incidents that are described in the book of Acts. This kind of study illustrates that a good understanding of the background and social context provides valuable insight for biblical interpretation.

Read: Acts 15:1-5; Galatians 2:1-10, 5:2-4, 10-12; Romans 2:25-29

The controversy about circumcision explained in Acts 15 in some way colors most of the letters of Paul, but particularly his letter to the Galatians. In Paul's mind, how important was this issue of circumcision? Explain.

How did Paul's understanding of circumcision affect the way he spoke to the new converts in Galatia about their relationship with Christ?

In the midst of the controversy, "circumcision" began to stand for many other things in Paul's letters. Make a list of these words or ideas in the left column. Then write words contrasted with circumcision in the right column.

Words associated with circumcision Words contrasted with circumcision

Read: I Corinthians 15:9, Galatians 2:6, Eph. 3:8, and I Tim. 1:15.

In each of these scriptures, Paul describes his spiritual authority or spiritual state of being in ways that few leaders today would venture to do in public.

Consult the chronology on the next two pages. List the four scriptures in the order they were likely written?

In what way might our biblical interpretation of Paul's intended meaning be enhanced by knowing the timing of these writings?

What can we learn from Paul by studying these sayings?

CHRONOLOGY OF ACTS AND PAUL'S EPISTLES

The following table was assembled from material written by Chamber Faw in the *Acts Believers Church Commentary* and H.C. Thiessen's *Introduction to the New Testament*. Since there are few dates that can be proven, most dates are estimated guesses based on scholarly inquiry.

Acts reference	Epistle reference	Event	Date range
2:1-41		Day of Pentecost	29-30
9:1-19		Conversion of Saul	33-35
	Gal. 1:17	Paul spent time in Arabia	
9:26-29	Gal. 1:18	Paul briefly visited Jerusalem	
9:30	Gal. 1:21	Paul went off to Tarsus (Syria and Cilicia)	
12:23		Death of Herod Agrippa	44
11:27-30		The famine relief	45-46
13:4-14:28		Paul's first missionary journey	46-48
15:1-35		Council at Jerusalem	49
18:2		Jews expelled from Rome	49
15:36-18:22		Paul's second missionary journey	50-52
		Paul wrote Galatians	
16:22-23	I Thess. 2:2		
17:5	I Thess. 3:4		
17:11-13		Jews from Thessalonica stirred up strife in Berea	

	I Thess. 3:1-3	Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica from Athens	
18:5	I Thess. 3:6; II Cor. 11:9; Phil. 4:15-18	Silas and Timothy return from Macedonia. Timothy reports from Thessalonica. They bring an offering.	
18:12		Paul wrote I Thessalonians	51-52
		Gallio as proconsul of Asia	51-52
18:19		Paul wrote II Thessalonians	
18:23-21:16		Paul's first visit to Ephesus	
19:1		Paul's third missionary journey	53-57
		Paul returns to Ephesus	
	I Cor. 16:8-10; II Cor. 12:18	Paul wrote I Corinthians from Ephesus, sent with Titus and another brother	
	I Cor. 16:1; II Cor. 8:6	Titus arranges for a collection and brings it back to Paul at Ephesus	
	II Cor. 2:1; 12:14,21:13:1-2	Paul made a short, painful visit to Corinth to face off with the opposition party, then returned	
	II Cor. 2:12-13; 7:6-16	Paul eagerly awaited news from Titus	
20:2-3	II Cor. 2:13; 7:5-7; 8:1; 9:2-4	Paul wrote II Corinthians from Macedonia	
	Rom. 15:25-27; I Cor. 16:1-4; II Cor. 8&9	Paul wrote the letter to the Romans from Corinth and sent it with Phoebe just before leaving for Jerusalem with the collection	
21:17-31		Paul's last visit to Jerusalem	57
23:25;24:27		Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea	57-59
27:1-28:10		Paul's voyage to Rome and shipwreck	59-60
	Col. 1:24; 4:3; Eph. 3:1,13; Philemon 1, 9-13, 23; Phil. 1:7; 2:17	Paul wrote Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians and Philippians from imprisonment in Rome	
28:30		End of the two years in Rome	62-63
	Rom. 15:24	Paul released at Rome for a time	
		Paul's work in the east and Spain	
		Paul wrote to Timothy in Ephesus	
	Titus 1:5	Paul wrote to Titus in Crete	
	2 Tim. 4:6-8	Paul wrote the second letter to Timothy while imprisoned at Rome a second time	